

PREACHING ON DEMAND

By

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DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Submitted to
New York Theological Seminary
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

New York, New York

2014

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2014

ABSTRACT

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We discovered that some adult and youth members of our church did not attend church worship services regularly. The goal of this study was to explore approaches that could be used to provide non-attending church members opportunities to engage in some type of meaningful worship experience. It is often argued that individuals should attend church with regularity because these same individuals manage to go to work on a regular basis. An opposing argument is that the “church” should provide meaningful worship experiences through the use of various technological devices. This is especially true since all of us are significantly impacted by technology. Through an examination of Scripture, culture, history, and research regarding multiple technological possibilities, it was determined that adult members who attend church sporadically and youth who do not attend church regularly might benefit from a “worship-on-demand” approach to worship.

This project assumed that there was a need to address the lack of church attendance for adults and youth. We used quantitative and qualitative data. That is, surveys and focus groups were two major tools employed to gather data relative to the above two populations’ attitude about church attendance. The data was consistent with what we hypothesized – work, family obligations, and proximity to the church impacted church attendance. As such, the idea of “worship-on-demand” was conceived and developed. The study concluded that there is a need for the “worship-on-demand” philosophy.

Dedication:

I would like to dedicate this work to my beloved Mother, the late Lillian E. Morrison, who always told me that that I can make it in life. She consistently believed in me even when things look gloomy and dark. Her encouragement and gentle reassurances helped me to forge ahead to where I am. For helping and encouraging me to be all I can be, I say, “thank you Mother.” I thank you for your kind words of encouragements and steadfast belief in me.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, let me give thanks, honor and “Praise” to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the head of my life. I thank and praise Him for all the wonderful things that He has done in my life and for allowing me to lead my present congregation.

I would like to thank the many individuals that have spoken words of encouragement to me over the past years. I give my utmost acknowledgements to my wife, Tracey McPherson; my son Basil McPherson Jr.; my daughter Tia McPherson; and even my grandson, Patience McPherson. I would also like to thank my entire Site team members - especially Dr. L. Teele PhD - who constantly remind me that I can make it. I express my profound acknowledgement to Bishop Rufus, Minister Verona Rogers, Bishop Horatio, and Lady Laurel Cameron for your many kinds word reminding me to stay the course when I was ready to quit. I would be remiss if I failed to mention my Church family located at 1243 Bushwick Ave, Brooklyn, NY. Members of the congregation constantly held me up with their prayers and words of encouragement. I wish to give special thanks to Dorie Blackwood who helped me through some of my most trying times during this journey. Last, but not least, I especially thank Dr. Keith Russell and Dr. Tammy Jackson.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTING	1
CHAPTER 2 PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF CHALLENGE	24
CHAPTER 3 PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION	35
CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	48
CHAPTER 5 METHODOLOGY AND EVALUATION PROCESS	126
CHAPTER 6 MINISTERIAL COMPETENCIES.....	130
APPENDICES	154
APPENDIX A PROPOSAL.....	155
APPENDIX B ANNOTATED WORSHIP RESOURCES.....	217
APPENDIX C WEBSITE REGISTRATION	225
APPENDIX D ADDITIONAL TECHNICAL WORK	227
APPENDIX E “WORSHIP-ON-DEMAND” DESIGN	229
APPENDIX F PASTOR EVALUATION.....	231
APPENDIX G SELF-EVALUATION.....	241
APPENDIX H PASTOR/BISHOP MCPHERSON PERFORMANCE REVIEW	245
APPENDIX I NARRATIVE EVALUATION.....	248
BIBLIOGRAPHY	250

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTING

The Setting

This demonstration project setting was in the City of Brooklyn, Kings County, New York. The location for this demonstration project was the Bushwick Avenue Church of God of Prophecy. The church is located at 1243 Bushwick Avenue, Brooklyn, New York 11221. It was organized in 1934. The Bushwick Avenue Church of God of Prophecy is a faith-based church that is readily accessible to the targeted population. Participants in this project are fundamentally people classified as minorities.

According to the U.S. Government's Census Bureau 2010 Census Data, Brooklyn has a population of approximately 2,505,000. It is the largest city in the State of New York and it is the largest of the five boroughs of New York City. This means that Brooklyn is the seventh most populous county in the United States. The Bushwick Community (North and South) has a population of approximately 121,000. The 2010 data shows that 43% of Brooklyn's population is white, while 34% is black. The median age of females in Brooklyn is about 36 years old. For males, the approximate median age is 32 years.

People in Brooklyn spend an average of 43 minutes commuting to work each day. About 86% of the housing in Brooklyn is in multi-unit dwellings (i.e. apartments in buildings with two or more units). There are approximately 10,267 apartment buildings in Brooklyn. Brooklyn, New York continues to be a culturally rich city. Nearly 50% of the

population speaks languages other than English – Arabic; Chinese; French (including Patois, Cajun); French Creole; Hebrew; Italian; Polish; Russian; Spanish or Spanish Creole; and Yiddish. Estimates provided by the Association of Religion Data Archives states that approximately 1,552,000 Brooklyn residents ascribe to some type of religion. Namely, the religious declarations are as follows:

- Catholic: 58.8%
- Protestant: 12%
- Orthodox: 0.72%
- Jewish: 24.4%
- Muslim: 3.73% ¹

History of the Church of God of Prophecy

In order to present the development of the Church of God of Prophecy appropriately, it is important to present the extended context that led to its establishment. As such, this paper reviews factors that lead up to development of the denomination that the Church of God of Prophecy grew out of.

During the 1700's, people became intoxicated with the notion that the universe works in harmony with natural laws. This was the age of Enlightenment. It spread relative sparsely over Europe and North America, but it flourished in Paris. Nominal Christians of all classes and both genders frequently met in salons or clubs to discuss the writings of contemporary intellectuals, called *philosophes*. Among the *philosophes* were men such as Jean Jacques Rousseau and Francois Voltaire. Rousseau proposed the notion

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, "State & County QuickFacts, Kings County," <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/36/36047.html> (accessed January 30, 2014).

that the minority who knew what was best for the majority should impose their will on the majority for the majority's sake.²

Francois Voltaire used the tragedy of the Lisbon earthquake of November 1, 1755 to promote the idea that God does not care about humanity. He insisted that humans needed to look out for themselves. It was this argument that significantly paved the way for the French Revolution. Voltaire repeatedly rejected the inspiration of the scriptures and taught that human reason was far superior to the teachings of Christianity. He rejected all of the Old Testament and declared that it merely reduced humans to no more than brutes.³

During the French Revolution, an American citizen, Thomas Paine, was voted in as a member of the French National Assembly. Paine, the eccentric American, agreed strongly with Voltaire and his (Voltaire's) followers. Like Voltaire, Paine detested many things the Christian faith espoused. While in Paris, Thomas Paine wrote his famous *The Age of Reason*. In it, he defiantly and angrily states: "I sincerely detest the Old Testament."⁴

The defiant French Revolutionaries proposed that a wholly new calendar be created. The new one would not start with the birth of Christ, but rather it would start with the first year of their revolution. The old calendar had 200 holy days out of the 365 days of the year. In the new calendar, all holy days were abolished. Even worshipping on

² Steward C. Easton, *The Western Heritage From the Earliest Times to the Present* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1961), 487-488.

³ Graham Gargett, *Voltaire and Protestantism* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation at the Taylor Institution, 1980), 457, 463, 464.

⁴ Thomas Paine, "The Age of Reason," in Philip S. Foner, ed., *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, 2 vols. (New York: The Citadel Press, 1969), 1:474.

Sunday was not acknowledged. Under the new anti-Christian calendar, the week was made to be ten days long instead of seven. Every tenth day, or “Decade Day,” was acknowledged as a holiday and was dedicated to celebrating the new pagan religion and the Republic. The months of the calendar were renamed after the seasons and were called, Snowy, Hot, Harvest, Windy, Foggy, Rainy, etc.⁵

The French Revolution did not really abolish Christianity. Rather, it proclaimed freedom of worship for all religions. Paradoxically, it forbade street processions that were characteristic of Catholicism at the time. Leaders of the Revolution persuaded the bishop of Paris and his associates to abdicate their fiduciary responsibilities. That is, they were persuaded to renounce their ministry. When this was announced, 48 sections of Paris responded with resounding delight. In one section of Paris, the people celebrated by lighting a bonfire and burning confessionals and other types of books churches used.⁶

The determination to de-Christianize France was by no means limited to Paris. According to McManners, other cities started the de-Christianization process before Paris did.⁷ He declares that in other places, churches were ravaged by looters and pipe organs were dismantled by carpenters and masons. Chalices, crucifixes, images, and communion items were taken or destroyed. Large amounts of gold and silver were taken from churches and sent to Paris. It was used to pay for a new national military. A famous historian says, “The rabble, indulging their taste for the burlesque, caricatured in the most ludicrous manner the ceremonies of religion, and took as much delight in profaning as

⁵ John McManners, *The French Revolution and the Church* (London: S. P. C. K., 1969), 95-105.

⁶ M. A. Thiers, *The History of the French Revolution* (London: William Nimmo, 1983), 373.

⁷ McManners, *French Revolution*, 86-97.

they had formerly done in celebrating them.”⁸ Thus, France was determined to fully destroy Christianity. V. H. H. Green states, “For the first time in European History since the days of the [Roman] Emperor Julian the Apostate a state deliberately embarked on a policy of de-Christianization.”⁹

Maximilien Robespierre is credited with being the major leader of the reign of terror. By some estimates, he was responsible for about 17,000 deaths. He argued that the worship of a Supreme Being was not a religious one, but was political. In speeches, he justified the reign of terror by stating

Priests are to morality what quacks are to medicine. I know nothing that so nearly resembles atheism as the religions which they [the priests] have invented. By grossly misrepresenting the Supreme Being, they have annihilated him as far as lay in their power...The priests have created a God after their own image; they have made him jealous, capricious, greedy, cruel, and implacable.¹⁰

Robespierre at last clothed himself as a prophet and declared himself to be the leader of the new Revolution. He made this public proclamation on a Sunday, a day in which Catholics had planned to honor Pentecost.

It is in the context of the aforementioned that a new era was to start. Though it appeared that the Christian faith was in trouble, God’s hand was in the midst of history. Right after the French Revolution had reached its peak, God already had in place a plan to counteract its seemingly devastating blow. Christianity was about to enter its most brilliant era to date. The seeds of the new era had already started to germinate during the 1700’s. Evangelical revivals could be seen throughout various places in England.

⁸ Thiers, *French Revolution*, 373.

⁹ V. H. H. Green, “Forward,” in McManners, *French Revolution*, ii.

¹⁰ Thiers, 426-427.

Individuals such as George Whitfield, Benjamin Ingham, the Countess of Huntington, and the Wesley brothers – John and Charles – were establishing the faithfulness of Christianity. It was during the 1700's Methodism was taken from Great Britain to America.¹¹

Also, it was during the turbulent 1700's that that a number of groups sensed the need for inexpensive exposure to scriptures, especially for the poor. As a result, a number of small Bible societies were created. In addition, the Moravians commissioned missionaries to carry forth the gospel; other missionary societies were started. Thus, by the close of the 1700's, revivalism, the distribution of the Bible, and missionary commissioning were put in place as an antidote to the periods of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. The Industrial Revolution and Western expansion helped Christianity to spread by leaps and bounds.

Historical Development

The Church of God of Prophecy (CoGoP) is a Christian Church that has its roots steeped in the Pentecostal Holiness religious affiliation. Some within our denomination religious affiliation contend that our church stems from the experiences and teachings of the second chapter of the book Acts – the Day of Pentecost. As such, they would contend that CoGoP can claim the teachings the teaching of Apostolic Succession. That is, our church has been seceded from the original Pentecostal experiences bestowed on the early Christians and apostles.

¹¹ A. Skevington Wood, "Awakening, John and Charles Wesley, and The Methodists," in *Eerdmans Handbook to the History of Christianity*, ed. Tim Dowley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 434-455.

It is not the purpose of this paper to demonstrate the truth or error of the above belief. My purpose is to trace the roots of my church (CoGoP). That is, from what religious denomination did our church get its start? Are the teachings the same as the mother church?

History has taught that there may be a number of reasons a church or denomination is started. One reason may be that a denomination may feel it no longer wants to hold on to certain teachings it once proclaimed. Sometimes, individuals are not able to accept the change. As a result, some people may hold on to former teachings and decide to do so under a new denominational name. Conversely, those who want to bring about certain changes in the church may choose to do so under a new denominational name.

The paper will examine the condition that brought about the creation of denomination –CoGoP. I will identify what teachings remain in place relative to our mother denomination. In addition, I will address what which teachings are different, if this is what happened. It is to this end that this section is written.

The Pentecostal wing of the Church of God of Prophecy was born during the time of the Holiness Movement during the nineteenth century. The Holiness Movement specifically traces its roots to the era of John Wesley. In the eighteenth century, Wesley's teachings were somewhat different from what the people had been accustomed to hearing.

The Development of Church of God of Prophecy

The John Wesley movement should be placed in the context of what Christian beliefs espoused over the years. That is, John Wesley was only a part of the larger Christian tradition. According to Larry Jent, “Mr. Wesley himself was not trying to build

a religion around himself. What he was trying to do was to recover the faith and the practice of the Primitive Christian Church of the first three hundred years before Christianity emerged with the culture as the religion of the Roman Empire.”¹² That is, Wesley was trying to get people back to the place of primitive godliness that was evident right after the day of Pentecost. He intended to do this because the world of the Christian faith had been corrupted by the period of the Enlightenment, the experience of the French Revolution, and such writings as the previously cited *The Age of Reason*.

John Wesley taught that salvation is a two-tiered experience. The first tier was composed of justification that manifested itself through the conversion experience. With this experience, one is said to be forgiven of sins and freed from their guilt. The second tier was composed of total sanctification. This experience was supposed to liberate one from his/her fallen nature. At the very least, one is to be liberated from a tendency towards sin. In the early nineteenth century, revivalists such as the president of Oberlin College – Asa Mahen – and the famous evangelist Charles G. Finney both promoted the theology espoused by Wesley. Both taught “that sinners had the natural ability to believe, and that evangelistic methods could overcome their moral inability through the persuasive power of the Gospel.”¹³ They also applied the same understanding to a Christian’s growth toward maturity.

Wesleyan Holiness was contrasted to the teachings of the Reformed Church. That is, Wesleyan Holiness taught that a state of perfect holiness is attainable before death. It

¹²Larry Jent, *Virginia United Methodist Advocate*.

¹³ Edwin Woodruff Tait, “The Cleansing Wave,” Christian History and Biography, www.christianitytoday.com/ch/2004/issue82/7.22.html (accessed May 3, 2010).

is this teaching that caused the eighteenth century Methodists to have conflicts with their Calvinist contemporaries.¹⁴

Apparently, Methodism lost its appeal and was revived during the 1870's. The resurgence of Wesleyan Holiness was relatively weak in Britain but was strong in America. As such, a "holiness revival" gave rise to the Salvation Army. The Salvation Army and the Church of the Nazarene closely followed a popular writing of John Wesley, *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. In this writing, Wesley promotes the notion of entire sanctification; he calls it perfect love.¹⁵

It appears that John Wesley subscribed to the notion of what one cannot do through a poem or song. It was important to him that all who heard his message or those who read his writings get the message that he tried to promote. As such, John and his brother Charles promoted their doctrine in the words of the hymn:

Answer that gracious end in me
For which thy precious life was given:
Redeem from all iniquity,
Restore and make me meet for heaven.
Unless thou purge my every stain,
Thy suffering and my faith in vain¹⁶

This doctrine was a direct challenge to the teachings of the Reform church.

Methodist Holiness did not maintain its initial fervor. At one point, it was profoundly popular among the masses. The decreasing popularity of Wesleyan Holiness came as a result of the decline of the intellectual context in which it had been established. Some of the principles were based on themes from the age of Enlightenment. In recent

¹⁴ Stephen C. Barton, *Holiness Past and Present* (New York: T & T Clark, 2003), 305.

¹⁵ Ibid, 305-306.

¹⁶ F. Whaling, ed., *John and Charles Wesley, Selected Prayers, Hymns, Journal Notes, Sermons, Letters and Treatises* (London: SPCK, 1981), 319.

years, John Wesley has been recognized as an Enlightenment thinker.¹⁷ Other denominations had been impacted by the teachings of Wesleyan holiness, but by the end of the eighteenth century, there were only a few groups outside of Methodism that supported the teachings of Wesleyan Holiness. Literally thousands proclaimed that they believed in the Wesleyan teachings, but they failed to make a Christian profession of it. Some became ex-Methodists.¹⁸

As it was mentioned earlier, John Wesley was influenced by the Enlightenment; he participated in the high culture of his day. Thus, it is to be expected that his followers would follow his lead. One such disciple was Adam Clark. Clark was considered the greatest intellectual Methodist of the nineteenth century. He too advocated Enlightenment values. Proponents of the Enlightenment had declared that the supreme goal in life was to be happy. Clark insisted that the goal of the Christian faith was “to be in the state of happiness.”¹⁹

Some individuals believe that Methodism had been deeply entrenched into the Enlightenment philosophy from its inception. They conclude that John Wesley unified concepts of the Enlightenment and Evangelical religion. Thus, one of the principles of Wesley’s Quadrilateral is reason - rational thinking coupled with rational and sensible interpretation. The influence of Wesleyan Holiness continued to decline even into the twentieth century. At the start of the twentieth century, Wesleyan Holiness and piety had diminished to a few denominations that were considered to be near the bottom of the

¹⁷ Barton, *Holiness Past and Present*, 308.

¹⁸ David Bebbington, *Holiness in Nineteenth-Century England* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2000), 51, 52.

¹⁹ Ibid., 58.

social scale. However, there were a few churches in the Pentecostal movement who found Wesleyan holiness teachings appealing. Followers included the Pentecostal League, the International Holiness Mission, the Calvary Holiness Church, and some members of the Salvation Army. Within Methodism, the Wesleyan Holiness Movement had all but died.²⁰

Holiness gave birth to a new denomination identified as Pentecostal. The Pentecostal denomination grew out of Holiness during the second half of the nineteenth century. The establishment of the Pentecostal faith grew out discontentment with the social and theological practices and beliefs of that time. Those who this denomination appealed to were the lower and middle classes groups. Advocates of the Holiness faith had become disenchanted with the impiety of many mainline denominations. They viewed other churches as becoming too worldly by accumulation wealth and elaborate church facilities. Thus, their displeasure caused those individuals to establish new religious communities that would be committed to carry out what they perceived to be basic to theological doctrine – perfectionism.²¹

Many of those who joined the Pentecostal Movement were former Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptists. They believed they were receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit much like the disciples did on the Day of Pentecost. Some scholars were not able to understand the appeal Pentecostalism made to the masses. Many scholars, for example, supported the notion of H. R. Niebuhr. He believed that an analysis of religion revealed

²⁰ Ibid., 71, 72.

²¹ Grant Wacker, “Searching for Eden with a Satellite Dish: Primitivism and the Pentecostal Character, in Religion and American Culture,” in *Religion and American Culture: A Reader*, ed. David Hackett (New York: Routledge, 1995), 440.

that theology was a reflection of the political and cultural conditions that existed.²²

Scholar Donald Dayton believes that the root of the Pentecostal faith lies within the emergence of four key theological doctrines that were prominent during the second half of the nineteenth century: baptism of the Holy Spirit, the second coming of Christ, the gift of healing, and salvation.²³

One tie that appears to connect Wesleyan Holiness and the Pentecostal movement is that of the role of women within the church. Both denominations allowed women to have active roles in the work of the church. John Wesley was a staunch proponent that women should have an active role in the work of the church. Similarly, the Pentecostals encouraged women to be worship leaders and evangelists. Some surmise that this may be one reason women were attracted to Pentecostalism.²⁴

The Church of God was organized in August 1886 at a meeting at Barney Creek Meetinghouse in the state of Tennessee. R. G. Spurling, a licensed Baptist minister, took a leadership position in the establishment of the denomination. Members of the group originally adopted the name of “Christian Union.” Later, members decided to change the name to Church of God. Initially, the denomination was mainly whites. However, since 1909, African-Americans have played a role in the denomination; some became members.

²² H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1957), 17, 75-76.

²³ Donald Dayton, *The Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1987), 173-174.

²⁴ Wayne Warner, *The Women Evangelists: The Life and Times of Charismatic Evangelist Maria Woodworth-Etter* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1986), 180-183.

After 10 years of little growth, three laypersons claimed to have a “deep religious experience” that mirrored that of John Wesley of Methodism. Shortly thereafter, the church began to preach on the subject of sanctification. Services were held at Camp Creek, Cherokee County, North Carolina. During a revival, individuals spontaneously began to speak in tongues. They felt that they had experienced what the disciples did on the day of Pentecost.²⁵

In 1903, Ambrose J. Tomlinson (Quaker background) joined the group and became pastor of the Camp Creek Church. This single event is viewed as the start of the Church of God movement. He was influenced by the Church of God movement of Anderson, Indiana and persuaded the group to adopt that name. Tomlinson became a prominent leader and the church moved to Culbertson, Tennessee. Later, he and his church moved to Cleveland, Tennessee. It was at the 1907 assembly that the church officially changed its name to Church of God. Tomlinson was baptized with the Holy Spirit and he spoke in tongues. He was subsequently made general moderator in 1909 and was elected general overseer for life in 1914.²⁶

History of Bushwick Avenue Church of God of Prophecy

During the early 1930’s George Henry Thurston who is now deceased, began holding prayer meetings in homes in Brooklyn, N.Y. The prayer group became well known and it became necessary to find a place to hold meetings. In 1933, a place was found on Warren Street in Brooklyn, and the church was set in order. The pastor held all night prayer meetings and fasting with the church in Brooklyn, and this resulted in many

²⁵ Wardell Payne, *Directory of African American Religious Bodies: A Compendium by the Howard University School of Divinity* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1991): 206-207.

²⁶ Ibid, 207.

souls being brought back to Christ. Bishop Thurston served as pastor from that time until his death in 1949.

After the death of Bishop Thurston, the State Overseer, Bishop J. F. Aites assumed the responsibility of pasturing the Brooklyn church for several years. During this administration the church moved from the Warren Street area to a large edifice located at Atlantic Avenue and Bond Street. In 1952 Brother John M. Sands was appointed as pastor. He was forced to resign after serving one year, due to illness. Bishop Aites then assumed the pastorate again until 1955. By this time Bro. Sands recovered from his illness and was again appointed as pastor. He pastored the church for one year. In May of 1956, Brother William N. Smith was appointed, and served for seven years until his death in 1963.

These were very challenging years for the church, and a lack of adequate facilities made it necessary to move to several locations in an effort to find an adequate place to worship. However the church grew steadily and strong. The membership made tremendous sacrifices in supporting the church work throughout the years, since this was the strongest and largest church in the state, as well as the first in the Brooklyn area. In 1963, Bishop John C. Newkirk was appointed. It was during Bishop Newkirk's pastorate that the church brought the present edifice at 1243 Bushwick Avenue. Here again the membership made many sacrifices, but it was well worth it, for this edifice served for many years as a center for our State Conventions and all other state functions. Bishop Newkirk pastured for seven years. In July of 1970, Bro. J.M. Sands served as pastor for a year. In July of 1971, he was succeeded by Bishop William Boone who served for three

years until 1974. During his administration, the churches continue to grow, and many renovation projects were accomplished.

Our next pastor was Bishop Rufus R. Rogers who served from 1974–1978. Bishop Willie Brown was then appointed as pastor and served from September 1978–July 1981. In August of 1981 he was succeeded by Bishop George Jones who served until 1983 and he was succeeded by Bishop Eric Barnes, who during his administration allowed the church to pay off the existing mortgages and the church pews. Bishop Barnes served until July 1990. He was succeeded in August 1990 by Bishop James Hoskins who served until 1997. He was succeeded by Bishop Rufus R. Rogers who served 1997–2001 and he was succeeded by his wife Minister Verona Mae Rogers who served 2001–July 2003. In August 2003 until this present time, Bishop Basil E. McPherson Sr. was appointed to pastor at 1243 Bushwick Avenue. Bishop McPherson is under the leadership of Bishop Rogers and Minister Verona Rogers. He served as Associate Pastor and Church Administrator.

Mission

The Church of God of Prophecy is characterized as a Protestant, Evangelical, Wesleyan Holiness, and Pentecostal Movement. The denomination subscribes to the notion that humans possess a freewill regarding salvation. Membership into the Church of God of Prophecy is open to anyone who is a “Born-Again Christian.” Candidates who qualify for membership are traditionally welcomed into the Church in a ceremony. Candidates are asked the following:

“Will you sincerely promise in the presence of God and these witnesses that you will accept the Bible as the Word of God – believe and practice its teachings rightly

divided – the New Testament as your rule of faith and practice, government and discipline, and walk in the light to the best of your knowledge and ability?”

Those wishing to join simply reply “I will.”

Our worldwide denomination has taken a leadership position of reminding local churches of its mission. As such, our denomination has implemented a plan to maintain our present membership and at the same time reach out to the “unchurched.” The name of the program is called Vision 2020. The denomination at-large has provided ideas and parameters that the local church can use in order to carry out the gospel commission. Fundamentally, it is up to the local church to design a local program to carry out the Great Commission. It is to this end that this demonstration project reflects what our denomination and local church purports to do in order to reach our mission goals. That is, this project addresses the needs of our parishioners (maintenance program) and the need to reach the “unchurched.”

Mission Reflections

Our church teaches that the mission of the church is to take the gospel to the entire world; it is to be fundamentally done through the organized church. As such, we are organized to provide services to those who are part of the body of Christ as well as those who are not. Our two-pronged mission is to nurture the members of our congregation and engage in outreach to those who are categorized as “unchurched.”

Our church believes in the fundamental teachings of Jesus when he said, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:19-20).

Our denomination contends that when believers in Christ unite as a congregation to do the work that Jesus commissioned the church to do, we must ask a fundamental question: How can we best organize ourselves to allow the church to function and fulfill its divine purpose? As such, our church follows a principle applied by architects - “form follows function.” Similarly, we believe that the “form” or structure of our church’s ministry should follow the “function” and purpose of the church. It is to this end that our church body is designed to carry out the “great commission.”

Function and Structure. The Church’s Basic Function

Our church believes that in order to have a meaningful functioning church, it is crucial to have an understanding of how the church is to function. Based on the ideologies and understanding of the church’s function, we will subsequently be able to incorporate an adequate structure.

We reflected upon the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 and on the early church in Acts 2:42-47 (other scriptures as well). We concluded that there are four fundamental functions or areas of ministry follows (listed alphabetically):

- Equipping, Teaching, Bible Study ...Matthew 28:20; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; John 14:26
- Evangelism, Outreach, MissionsMatthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 5:20; Mark 16:15
- Fellowship, Encouraging, Accountability ... Hebrews 3:13, 10:24-25; 2 Timothy 4:2
- Praise, Prayer, Worship.....Ephesians 5:19-20, 6:18; Psalms 33:1

Further, we believe that the above four areas are represented by four relational aspects of the church. Namely, they include a relationship:

- Between the church and those outside of it
- Within the church
- Towards God
- God has toward the church

In addition, our church structure is designed to address directional words that describe the direction of the relationship. These include:

- **Out-Reach:** The church reaching out to those outside the church. (*Evangelism, Outreach, Missions*)
- **In-Reach:** The church reaching in to those inside the church. (*Fellowship, Encouraging, Accountability*)
- **Up-Reach:** The church reaching up by communicating and giving to God. (*Praising, Prayer, Worship*)
- **Down-Reach:** God reaching down by communicating and giving to the church. (*Equipping, Teaching, Bible Study*)

It is our belief that all of the above relationships must work together so that each entity can function properly. The above are components of discipleship process – the Great Commission. The leadership at our church has observed that the third area of function - Fellowship, Encouraging, and Accountability – needs to be addressed at our church. As such, this is the area on which this project is focused.

Church's Basic Structure

Our church teaches that a very significant part of the church's structure is the Chief Shepherd - Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23, 4:15-16; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13). He binds and holds the church's body together. Without Him as the head of the church, it would not be able to function or accomplish its mission. Beneath the Chief Shepherd (Jesus), there are under shepherds (overseers, elders or pastors); they are the spiritual leaders of the church. These spiritual leaders may be comprised of individuals who have dedicated their livelihoods to ministry, while others may make a living elsewhere. However, the primary focus of both groups is to oversee the spiritual concerns of the church (Acts 6:1-4)

Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, ‘It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.’ (ESV)²⁷

The above passage shows that the early church’s spiritual leaders (twelve apostles) saw a need to remain focused on the spiritual matters of ministry. As a result, the office of deacon was created to provide support and service to the spiritual leadership – deacon addressed the other primarily physical aspects of ministry. This prevented the spiritual leadership from becoming preoccupied with non-spiritual matters. Thus, our church subscribes to the above model of church structure. We believe that the model will help our church reach its fullest potential.

Our denomination and local church subscribes to the scripture that says, “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18). In recent years, we have tried to help our local congregation and the community by clearly defining our role with both entities. Our vision has been to establish and maintain ministries that empower individuals and help them see their lives united with Christ and to explore what it means to be a true disciple of Christ. We endeavor to empower themselves through the lenses of the church, home, peers, school, work places, and community. Our church promotes the notion that God’s way is always the best way.

We have a number of ministries that are designed to help the community as well as the church body. For example, each week we give away food to hundreds of residents

²⁷ English Standard Version (ESV). This translation was started in the early 1990s by Dr. Lane T. Dennis. The goal was to provide a new literal translation offered by competent pastors and scholars. Subsequently, a translation committee was created. Permission was granted by the National Council of Churches to use the 1971 edition of the Revised Standard Version as the English textual basis for the ESV.

in the community. Our food and clothing program is unique because we do not ration the food or clothing. People are free to take as much as they wish. The lines are often long, but the people wait patiently because they know that their needs will be fulfilled.

In order to appropriately carry out our mission and vision beliefs, we as a church body have decided to model our church after the paradigm of the prophetic church. My experience and study at New York Theological Seminary has influenced me to lead my church to engage in the teachings and aspiration promoted by prophetic ministry theorists. It is this paradigm that influenced me to engage in the project set forth in this paper. In the end, I anticipate that the youth of our church and community will be the beneficiaries of the project.

Our congregation is a church that has a composition of all age-level individuals. There are numerous individuals whose names are on the church roster, but a substantial number of them do not attend Sunday School or church service. Typically, Sunday School classes are not well-attended. That is, on a given Sunday, there is a dearth of attendance by church members relative to Sunday School classes. Over the past few years, we noticed that this trend has continued even though we tried to address the problem from the pulpit, home visits, telephone calls, mailings, emails, etc. Despite our efforts, the problem persists.

The congregation is located in the Bushwick Community of Brooklyn, NY. It is a community located in the northern section of Brooklyn in New York City. It is part of Brooklyn Community Board 4, and it is served by the New York City Police Department 83rd Precinct.²⁸ It is represented in New York City Council as part of Districts 34 and

²⁸ NYPD 83rd Precinct, <http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/html/home/precincts.shtml> (accessed August 12, 2012).

37.²⁹ Bushwick's population in 2007 was 129,980. Roughly, 38.9% of that population was foreign born.³⁰ Most of the residents in this community are Latinos from the Caribbean island of Puerto Rico and from the Dominican Republic. However, in more recent years it has been observed that there has been an increase in native-born Americans. In addition, there are other Latino groups that have settled into the area—particularly immigrants from Mexico.³¹

The most recent survey (2008) indicates that the neighborhood's median household income was \$28,802. Just over 30% of the population falls under the poverty line. This makes Bushwick the 7th most impoverished neighborhood in New York City. That is, over 75% of children and youth in the neighborhood are living in poverty.³² Only 40.3% of students in Bushwick read at grade level, making it the 49th most literate neighborhood in the city in 2007. 58.2% of students do math at grade level in Bushwick, 41st in the city. In 2007, Bushwick averaged 25 felonies per 1000 persons, the 25th, out of 55, most felonious community district in the city.

There is a need to address the literacy problem of the above described population. As such, there is an educational infrastructure of thirty-three public and private, primary and secondary schools that serve the Bushwick community. The educational

²⁹NYC Brooklyn City Council Members District 37, <http://council.nyc.gov/html/members/brooklyn.shtml> (accessed August 3, 2013).

³⁰ Furman Center for Real Estate & Urban Policy, "State of the City's Housing & Neighborhoods, Bushwick Brooklyn 2008," http://furmancenter.org/files/sotc/SOC2008_Brooklyn.pdf (accessed July 27, 2012).

³¹ "Bushwick Brooklyn," http://familypedia.wikia.com/wiki/Bushwick,_Brooklyn (accessed February 18, 2013).

³² Ibid.

infrastructure includes public elementary schools, one charter school, four parochial schools, seven high schools, and one secondary school.³³

Slightly over 40% of students in the Bushwick Community read at grade-level. This makes it the 49th most literate neighborhood in the city. About 58% of students are at grade level with math, which places it at the 41st position in the city.³⁴ Just a few years ago, the community averaged 25 felonies per 1,000 residents. It was 25th out of 55 with the most felonies in a community in the city.³⁵ An interesting fact about the community is that Bushwick is the largest hub of Brooklyn's Hispanic-American community. Similar to other New York City neighborhoods, Bushwick's Hispanic population is basically Puerto Rican and Dominican; it also has a sizable South American population. As nearly 80% of Bushwick's population is Hispanic, residents have created many businesses to support their various national and distinct traditions in food and other items. The community's profile when compared to other communities in Brooklyn³⁶ is quite different - our community is heavily populated with a Latino population. Our church is located in a community that is roughly 75% Latino, 21% African-American, and about 4% of other populations (Asians and whites).³⁷

The goal of the demonstration project is to focus on the component of praise and worship. We want to assess and improve this aspect of church ministry because we

³³ NYC Department of City Planning, "Brooklyn Community District 4 Profile," http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/neigh_info/bk04_info.shtml (accessed January 18, 2014).

³⁴ Furman Center, "State of the City's Housing."

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Bushwick/ neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York. <http://www.city-data.com/neighborhood/data.com/neighborhood/Bushwick-Brooklyn-NY.html>, (accessed July 23, 2012).

³⁷ Ibid.

believe that it directly impacts the attendance of congregants and the impressions visitors receive.

Introduction to the Problem

At the start of this project, there were several questions that haunted me. I asked myself, “Why do Christians gather for the worship experience? What causes the gathering of people to be converted into a worship event? What are the distinctive features of a Christian worship experience? Is the pastor the only person who should lead in the worship event? What qualities should an effective worship leader possess?”

The Problem

I first became aware of a need to address the above questions when a parishioner told me that her family did not come to church as often as they had previously done so because of poor worship leadership. The person stated that if I wanted the family to attend church regularly, I needed to improve the worship activity.

My interest in what the parishioner said was followed by a one-on-one discussion. The parishioner told me that others in the church decided not to attend because of the distance they had to drive. The discussion delved into potential solutions to the problem. The parishioner said that we needed to “improve worship” and provide parishioners opportunities to attend by using technology. It was communicated to me that many members live quite a distance from the church and that the membership is rapidly growing old. Technology was suggested as a way to address the spiritual needs of the congregation. It was also pointed out to me that some members are already reaching out to others through technological means as a way of fulfilling their spiritual needs. Further investigations pointed out that some members were financially supporting ministries that they were watching on TV on Sunday mornings.

CHAPTER 2

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF CHALLENGE

It is important to consider the idea of the “worship gathering” itself. History reveals that viewpoints have changed and evolved throughout the years regarding Jesus and the sacraments. However, there is one thing that has remained constant relative to Christian gatherings. We live in an age of individualism. People want to do things alone. Yet, we discover that people continue to see that people gather for public worship rather than have individual worship. Thus, it appears that public worship remains indispensable. It is important to understand why individuals choose to be a part of corporate worship rather than have private devotion or worship at home.

I contend that there are four fundamental reasons that individuals gather for worship. Namely, these include: the unity of the Trinity; the priesthood of all believers; so that church members can be edified; and it is the command of Scripture. The unity of the Trinity is a basic premise to the gathering of believers. Grenz promotes the idea that: “Because God is a social (triune) reality, it is only in relationship – in community – that we are able to reflect the divine nature.”³⁸ James Torrance supports the notion that worship is participation in the divine; heavenly worship that is taking place even now. Torrance suggests that Trinitarian worship is the “gift of participating through the Spirit

³⁸ Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 67.

in the incarnate Son's communion with the Father.”³⁹ Thus, when church members gather to worship, they engage in an ongoing fellowship with the Trinity. Metaphorically speaking, worshipping is like joining a party with the Divine that is already in progress.

The second reason believers gather for worship has to do with the teaching of the priesthood of all believers. The Apostle Peter wrote “you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5). The scripture promotes the notion that believers who were once the spiritual stones of the temple are now the temple itself. Further, these same believers are to function as the priesthood by offering up spiritual sacrifices to God. What are these spiritual sacrifices that the believers who have gathered to offer? There are four New Testament offerings in which sacrificial language is used: Self (Rom. 12:1-2); Service (Phil 2:17), Giving (Phil 4:18); Thanks and Praise (Heb. 13:15).

According to 1 Peter 1:5, the Apostle describes what believers are to do when they gather. He continues to describe the actual identity of the gathering. “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy” (1 Pet. 2:9-10).

It seems evident from the above verses and observations that the corporate gathering is to be a corporate action; it is not individual actions in a crowded or filled

³⁹ James B. Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 85.

room. The main word used for Christian gathering is the Greek word *ekklesia*. It refers to those who are called out from the world. In an attempt to address the notion of the “gathering of the saints,” According to Allen, worship is when an individual meets with God. Allen further espouses the notion that worship is to be engaged both as a corporately and individually. Allen says that: “When we come to public worship, we come as the people of God, with the people of God, to meet with our God together.”⁴⁰ Underhill believes that Christians are not able to fulfill certain prescribed expectations in solitude.⁴¹ Thus, it is important for believers to gather and inject themselves into the corporate body.

A third reason for believers to gather in a corporate setting has to do with the horizontal relationship among believers. It is assumed that it is the result of a vertical relationship with the Triune God. Peterson declares that a major reason for worshipping in a corporate setting is to reconstitute the worship experience so that believers can recall God’s revelation and so that believers can push each other towards the goal of holy living.⁴² Edifying God comes as a byproduct of the priesthood of believers espoused in the word of God. Psalm 34 expresses the thought: “My soul will make its boast in the LORD; the humble will hear it and rejoice. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together” (34:2-3). The Apostle Paul expresses a similar idea in the letter to the Ephesians: “Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all

⁴⁰ Ronald B. Allen, *Lord of Song* (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1985), 55-58.

⁴¹ Evelyn Underhill, *Worship*, rev. ed. (Guildford, Surrey, UK: Eagle, 1991), 25.

⁴² David Peterson, *Engaging with God; A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 154-156.

things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ" (Eph 5:19-21).

According to Snodgrass, "Singing, then, has two audiences." That is, "Christians sing to each other, reminding each other about God's character and work in Christ, but they also sing to the Lord as a way of offering praise to him."⁴³ Earlier, I mentioned that edification is a byproduct of worship. Allen proclaims that: "we come as a group to give to God-and also to receive from him. And in this process we find ourselves also giving to God's people and receiving from them."⁴⁴

A church has to be careful when it comes to the notion of edification. That is, corporate worship experiences that tend to be focused on edification, rather than on God, may rapidly displace God from being at the center of worship for believers. The fourth element of worship in the New Testament commands believers to gather for corporate worship in various ways. For example, Jesus' high priestly prayer specifically seeks God on behalf of His followers – a community of believers is assumed (John 17). As mentioned earlier, North American Christians tend to live their lives as individuals rather than in a corporate-like manner. This belief and practice has caused Americans to feel that personal worship is superior to public worship. That is, individuals feel that as long as they worship God at some point during the day (Sunday), it is all right to do so. They feel that listening to a radio program or watching a television program is as good as gathering with a body of believers in a building called "the church." It is because of attitudes of this nature that scriptures were given to address the issue. Directives for

⁴³ Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians in the NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 99-102.

⁴⁴ Allen, *Lord of Song*. 41.

worship are both explicit and implicit. Christians are commanded not to live in isolation from each other. Hebrews 10:24-25 declares: “and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.” In addition, Acts 2:42 relates what the infant church was like by stating that “they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

For some time, our church board and church at-large noticed that a disproportionate number of our members do not attend church on a regular basis. Recently, we conducted a survey with those who attend church sporadically. We gathered reasons offered as to why they do not attend church. One argument proposed was that they are much busier than they were ten years ago. Youth say that social media like Facebook has greatly influenced them not to attend. We examined the virtues of the arguments and concluded that they were not substantial reasons for poor attendance at our church. We said that since every human being has 24 hours a day to plan what he/she wants to do, those reasons are insufficient to support the reasons our members are not attending church.

Some members say that church service is too long and it is boring. We acknowledged that we live in a society that is characterized by gimmicks and things that entertain. Apparently, some people are engaged in activities that are complex and intense. They may want relief from such circumstances and entertainment that is a feature in our culture that satisfies their immediate need. Technology has heightened an insatiable desire of some to be entertained. Unfortunately for them, church service is designed to be

a reflective environment rather than an entertaining one. The problem is exasperated because of the generational divide that exists among the various generations.

Youth at our church say they want to respect the traditions and beliefs of the older members of the church, while at the same time they want the older members to respect their (youth) values and ways of thinking. However, no longer do youth accept at face value the admonitions given by church leaders and other adults in the congregation.

Our youth say they'd rather engage in texting, MySpace, or Facebook so that they will not have to worry about getting up and come to church. They reason, "Why would we want to get out of bed, get dressed, come sit through a sermon that is not relevant to us?" They contend that it is easier to just "hang out" with friends when all their friends are as close as their computer, cell phone or some other device.

The project I propose requires a shift in the traditional way of thinking. The shift in thinking will impact the senior members more than the youth. For example, seniors in my church normally measure commitment to Christ and one's spirituality based on the rate of church attendance by an individual. A significant part of my proposal accommodates the perceived needs of youth and adults by providing them spiritual support when they miss attending church service. I propose to provide a "church on demand" experience for all who do not attend church. The idea is to reach church members where they are and try to help them get to the point when they will carry out the admonition of Paul: "...not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near" (Heb 10:25).

Our church has invested in sufficient resources that will allow the project to go forth. A survey of our youth indicates that 91% of them are technologically proficient; nearly half of the adults are. That is, they represent that they have sufficient skills that will allow them to navigate through various forms of technologies. Within our congregation, we have a number of youth and adults who have computer and informational technology degrees. They have indicated that they are willing to help those who may need to hone their skills. Thus, my project will address the needs of our youth and older persons who do not wish to attend church in the traditional manner.

The Site Team - Assembling the Team

The first step to improving an organization is to assess the mission of the organization. Secondly, I decided to assess the resources that are available. After a thorough review of the mission statement, I decided that the Site Team needed to be composed of individuals who apparently supported my ministry and those who were challenged to support me. This was done to ensure balance and that the opposing views would adequately be addressed and considered.

The team started by assessing the current situation. Data was collected by assigning various tasks to the team. I determined that the best decisions are made when data about the church informs the process so that a comprehensive view is achieved.

Collecting Data

Our team decided that we needed to collect data in order to make decisions. As such, we began by studying past and existing attendance behaviors of the site Team members. Next, we reviewed the characteristics of the families in our church. We asked questions such as:

- Is this church composed of a high percentage of single-parent homes?

- Is this a church with many English Language Learners?
- Is this a church with a high mobility rate?
- What percentage of our membership is known to experience violence, abuse, addiction, physical or mental illness?
- What educational goals do families have for their children?
- What is the literacy rate like among our membership?⁴⁵

There were 10 persons chosen to serve as members of the Site Team. Members were from diverse backgrounds. Some were educators, some were church members, non-church members, but all were Christians. Before a member was accepted to be a member of the team, a personal interview was conducted. Each member was informed as to the expectations of each member. Members were from a variety of professional and non-professional positions within the local community.

The Site Team members were informed about what the concerns were relative to church members not attending church as they once did. During a team meeting, several team members expressed concern as well. As a result of the open discussion, members of the team unanimously agreed that we should proceed with the demonstration project I recommended.

Members of the team met occasionally to discuss what role they needed to play in order to ensure that the goals were met. After due diligence, we compiled a list of annotated material that was to be used by the Site Team and me as we attempted to grasp a better understanding of worship (see Appendix B). We felt that this was important if we were to authentically address the concern of attendance at our church.

⁴⁵ Deborah Davis, “Supporting Parent, Family, and Community Involvement in Your School,” 4, http://www.pacer.org/mpc/pdf/titleipip/Supportinginvolvement_article.pdf (accessed January 31, 2014).

Members of the Site Team volunteered to collect data from members regarding worship. Together, we decided that I needed to be evaluated on a regular basis (see Appendices E-H). The focus was to be on what could be done to improve attendance of congregants, while at the same time address the need to reach out to others who are unchurched.

Members of the team decided to divide themselves into various groups. Some decided to work specifically with the technology phase of the demonstration project. A group decided to craft survey forms that would allow the team to determine the attitude regarding worship and attendance. At numerous meetings, we tweaked the content and format of the forms. Volunteers decided how the surveys would be distributed. Members were asked to attend prayer service as well as church service. At both services, members were asked to pass out survey forms and collect them before members left to go home.

Members of the Site Team discussed how the Internet and other technology vehicles have dominated individuals' lives during the twenty-first century. That is, people have moved from a heterogeneous lifestyle to more of a homogeneous one. Various technologies have been able to bring different communities and groups together in various ways. This allows the individuals to overcome issues of time, space, and cultural barriers. The Site Team discussed how various technologies have influenced how we live to a great degree. For example, a team member pointed out how individuals borrow books in electronic form from libraries. Thus, the Site Team concluded that the church needed to reassess itself relative to its use, or lack of use, of various technologies.

The Site Team determined that there were six areas that needed to be addressed if we were to meet our goals of increasing and stabilizing attendance by church members.

The six recommendations are as follows:

- Elevate the expectations of membership. Team members determined that many church members do not understand the importance for them to be active in the church. Members concluded that it probably is a case that no one has ever told members anything differently.
- Require an entry class for potential new members. Site Team members felt that it was essential to for new church members to understand the importance of being a member of a church. That is, they wanted members to feel that membership is meaningful. They felt that a class of this nature can be used as a platform to make sound statements to express what the expectations of committed members.
- Encourage members to get more involved. Team members believed that church attendance can increase if members were given ministry roles in the church. That is, members need to feel as though they are an integral part of the church.
- Provide more options for worship times. Team members reminded each other that we now live in a society that uses the 24/7 opportunities to do a variety of things. Members reminded each other that some members have to work while church service is taking place. If members are unable to attend the regular church service, the church needs to think about other alternatives for the membership. One answer to the dilemma is to use technological variations.
- Monitor church attendance of each member. It was determined that this approach may be very difficult - especially for worship attendance. There must be some type of system put into place in order to make this suggestion work. Members mentioned how calling missing Sunday School members was an effective way that monitored church attendance. The Site Group recommended that this approach be used for all groups within the church. It was believed that church members were less likely to be absent if they knew someone would contact them if they were absent.

- Create a “Worship on Demand” Technological Program – Members decided that it is in the best interest of the church to develop a “worship on demand” ministry, despite the cost. It was believed that it would be beneficial to the church’s youth as well as older adults. A ministry of this nature, it was felt, would address some of the concerns identified above.

CHAPTER 3

PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION

Goals and Strategies

A survey was created so that we could have a true picture regarding the attendance behaviors of congregants. The Site Team decided that it was best to develop a survey that would answer questions that would present an accurate picture of the attitude of church members. We discussed what the composition of the questions should be as well as the length of the survey. By consensus, it was decided that the length of the survey should not be a factor if it would provide data essential to providing an accurate picture of church members' attitudes.

A question arose regarding whether individuals would be honest with their responses due to time restraints. That is, would members check off various items without giving it thought just so they might complete the survey? We decided that in order to address this concern, we should distribute the survey at various activities of the church. For example, those who arrive early for prayer meeting could start completing the survey. A folder was created for each participant. If the participant completed only one-third or half of the survey, the person could complete the rest of the survey items the next time he/she attended a church activity.

A concern arose regarding the illiterate and our senior citizens. In order to accommodate their needs, Site Team members were available to help them by acting as a scribe. That is, the participant would be asked an item from the survey and the scribe

would record the response accordingly. Accommodations were made in order to ensure accuracy. For example, when a survey item was asked, it was repeated and the participant responded. After the response was recorded, the scribe read the survey item a third time and told the participant what response was recorded. The participant would then say “yes” or “no” to the response that was recorded. Also, participants were assured that confidentiality would be preserved. Scribes were taught not to make any type of response to any survey item. That is, they were not to make any gestures, sounds, facial expressions, etc. to the responses provided.

Data from the Survey

The survey, focus group sessions, and private conversations taught us a lot about the attendance habits of our church membership. The worship survey taught us that some of our members do not attend because when they bring their friend the church is not inviting to them. As a result we decided to use some of the suggestions made by Macintosh. For example, Macintosh⁴⁶ recommends that about 5% of the worship attendance should be first-time visitors. This means, that the church needs to intentionally prepare for visitors. In his book, “How to be a Friendly Church,” the following is suggested:

- There needs to be efforts to beautify the property
- adequate childcare service needs to be available
- adequate and clear directions throughout the church facility should be provided
- there should be someone to graciously and enthusiastically welcomed the guest

⁴⁶ Gary McIntosh, “Attracting Guests to Your Church,” (McIntosh Church Growth Network: April, 1992), http://churchgrowthnetwork.com/wp-content/files_mf/1282344213AttractingGuests.pdf (accessed January 18, 2014).

- preach messages that are relational uplifting and relevant
- and there should always be a follow-up to those who visit

The above suggestions mean that church members will take pride when they bring visitors and they will want to come. Macintosh also suggests that the way and friendly ushers, greeters, church officers, and others are recruited will be evidence of change in the church. Members will tend to want to attend more often.

During the announcement time each Sunday, emphasis was placed on the notion of church on demand. It was emphasized that this was strictly to accommodate persons who have challenges coming to church. The church clerk, pastor, head Deacon, and others emphasized this each week. It was also emphasized in small groups. For example, when deacons had their meetings it was emphasized that the “worship on demand” was for individuals who could not make it to church. Deacons were told that they were expected to be at church each Sunday. Other groups, such as the choir, usher boards, men’s ministry, and women ministry were also told that they were expected to be at church each Sunday for worship. They were also asked to encourage others to come for the worship experience. In these small groups, individuals were informed that one generally cannot have the same high level of worship experience at home as compared to the worship experience at church.

Announcements were placed in the church bulletin regarding church attendance and our concern about a lack of church attendance. The church bulletin demonstrated the idea that we’re going to have a “worship on demand” technological worship experience. It was announced that members who did not understand what the bulletin stated could ask members of the Site Team, the deacons, and the ushers to explain it to them. This

approach proved to be very successful. Members stated how individuals needed to help them understand the next steps the church would engage when trying to improve church attendance.

The Site Team decided to create a “worship on demand” pamphlet. The pamphlet is designed to inform members about how they can access the worship service if they are not present. However, a concern was that members would tend to stay at home and use the worship on demand worship experience rather than attend church physically. This could pose several problems. First, it would rob the member of the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit during the worship service. It is not to say that the Holy Spirit will not be present while an individual is viewing the church service at home. We believe that one’s presence in the church cannot be matched with worship through various types of media. Therefore, we highly encourage members to attend the worship service.

Another concern we had was whether the young people of the church would use this medium of worship just to say they “went to church.” That is, would it be perceived that it is okay to go out and party on Saturday night, get home early Sunday morning, remain in the bed until later that day, and then received the church on demand worship experience on some type of media?

It was a challenge to try and develop a pamphlet that was sophisticated enough to address all the issues and concerns. It was also challenging because the literacy level of some of our members is not as advanced as some of the other members. In addition, we had to be aware of the fact that many of our members were not technologically advanced, nor did they have the technical equipment needed in order to participate in the “worship on demand” project.

It was important for me to engage in a series of sermons that addressed church attendance. I have also had to be aware that I could not - Sunday after Sunday - simply have sermons that talked about church attendance only. It was felt that people would get bored from hearing about church attendance during the announcement and other activities during the day. However, I did give a specific sermon directed at the notion of the importance of church attendance. Subsequently, I made references to church attendance in other sermons.

Whenever there was a guest minister, the preacher was asked to make some type of reference about church attendance and he is or her sermon. The guest preachers were asked to publicly state that I had informed them about our desire to improve church attendance. This approach was designed to let our membership know that this was very important for me to know so that I could plan for the growth and development of our church. I wanted church members to ever be aware that their presence at the church is important to God.

On other occasions, such as Youth Today, the preacher for the day was asked to make reference to church attendance. The youth speaker for that day was our youth pastor; he made several references to church attendance. In order not to be perceived as a "hypocrite," he had to be deeply involved in doing whatever he could to ensure that he attended church regularly and that he passed that message on to youth in the church. Our youth pastor is also our choir director (minister of music). Thus, he was able to encourage the various choirs to be in attendance each Sunday whether they were performing or not. This strategy has especially helped the younger population of our church.

The Site Team recommended that there should be a DVD regarding church attendance during our weekly prayer service. We looked at the various limitations of this approach. One problem that we anticipated was the lack of attendance by all of the church membership. Prayer meeting is normally held on Wednesday evenings and a large percentage of our membership does not attend. One reason is due to the distance in which members have to travel in order to reach the church; another reason is that some members are working at that time; and still another reason is that some of our youth are in school and are working. Some members declare that they are so tired by the time that they get home, that they simply don't have enough energy to get to church. Some young parents say that by the time they get home from work and prepare the evening meal and do homework with the children, it is not enough time that day to get to prayer meeting as well.

Our Site Team is well-aware of the reasons given for not attending prayer meeting. We decided to give support rather than criticism of the reasons cited above. For example, we decided to prepare a light meal for those who chose to leave work and come directly to prayer meeting. We also decided that we would limit the time that prayer meeting would be held. Heretofore, prayer meeting would last from one and one half hours to two hours. It lasted that long because some persons gave very lengthy testimonies during the testimony period. In order to address this problem, we decided to suggest to those giving testimonies that they should limit their testimony to three minutes. Each evening of prayer meeting, I model the activity of giving a testimony. For example, I would give my testimony, and periodically looked down at my watch that suggested that I was trying to stay within my three-minute time limit. When I had about 20 seconds

left, I would publicly state I had to stop my testimony because I was about to go over my time. I said that I wanted others to share their testimonies and I wanted to be able to get in our Bible study so that we can leave on time. Members from the congregation would and shout “amen.” We decided to limit the entire service to one hour. Amazingly, attendance increased at prayer meeting. Thus this approach can be declared as being successful.

A strategy approach we used to try to get a grip on church attendance was that of a focus group. The use of a focus group was new for us. We told individuals the purpose of the focus group and fundamentally how the focus group would operate. We told the members that the purpose of the focus group is to have a small group discussion about their feelings and thoughts about attendance at church. We told them that we wanted to know directly from them how we can improve it and what were the barriers to church attendance. We recruited those who we felt came to church sporadically. We tried to encourage those who came on a regular basis to attend these meetings as well. We felt that if the two groups could commingle, there would be a marriage between the two and the stronger would help to “bear the infirmities” of the weaker. The challenge for us was to figure out when we would have these focus groups sessions. How long would each focus group session last? What was the long-range timeframe to enlist and implement the focus groups?

We determined that a focus group session would last no more than 30 minutes. Focus group sessions were held before Sunday school classes convened. This was done to accommodate the time of those who arrived early to church. Another session was held after church. Some individuals were waiting longer periods of time for someone to take them home, come pick them up, take a bus home, or take a cab home. Some of the

sessions were held by two or more sites members at the sessions. Some were conducted by the pastor. Still others were conducted by a combination of the pastor, Site Team members and deacons.

Some focus group sessions were conducted before the start of prayer meeting. We decided to accommodate the “time needs” of others by having sessions on Saturday’s. These sessions were held at various times throughout the morning and at various times throughout the afternoon. There were three Saturdays used to conduct the focus groups.

Another approach we used was to have members participate in a conference call. At each session of the focus group a recorder was identified. The recorder’s responsibility was to record concerns and responses to the concerns. The recorder was expected to specifically state the problem and the recommended solution. Once the data was collected from the various focus groups, it was compiled and considered by our Site Team members. It was our purpose that the focus group would be as interactive as possible and that an environment would be created so individuals would be willing to take risks, ask questions, and provide potential solutions. In the small group sessions (an average of eight in attendance), individuals who were not known to speak about any issue did so in these sessions. Thus, it was concluded that the focus groups were successful in obtaining valuable data.

The church decided to create a website in order to address the needs of members who have difficulty attending church. The website is designed to be user-friendly and readily accessible. As mentioned above, a problem we have is that some individuals are not technologically savvy. For them, we want to provide support in learning how to use modern technology. For those who do not have access to technology, we decided to

develop teams from the Site Team members and from other members in the congregation to be trained to take the technological advances to the homes of those who may be in need of it.

A Site Team member may unite with other members of the church and train them how to make a home visit to those who were not in attendance. For example, the Site Team member and at least one other person would use their personal laptop in order to take the “worship on demand” to the home of the non-technological logical savvy member. We realize that some members did not have access to the Internet. Members who took the “worship on demand” to the homes of non-attending church members also had access to portable connections to websites. That is, these persons used portable devices to access the satellite that enabled them to get on the Internet. When they entered a member’s home and that member did not have access to the Internet, they could still access the Internet by way of the mobile satellite device. This approach proved to be quite helpful and useful. Members were able to access the church service and other activities by using the website created by the church. Thus, “worship on demand” is an asset to our membership.

Features of the Website System

There is a need to have a systematic way to gather data and presented to the public. In order to accomplish this goal, the church will have the ability to upload videos and appropriately placed them in a variety of categories. The uploaded videos will be done only by the church’s administrative team. Before the videos are uploaded, they will be properly formatted.

There will be a video page after the video is produced. At some point the administrative team of the church will write an introduction for the video. The team may

choose to add a photo, it may add a gallery of photos, or it may choose to do something else so that the video is more attractive and meaningful to those who use it.

The page where the video is uploaded, the administrative team of the church would have made a decision regarding how often the video may be used. That is, the team will decide when access to the video is available and it will decide when the video is no longer available. However, the team can also decide that the video is a permanent one. The administrative team can disable or remove any video. Thus, changes can be made regarding the video at any point.

Marketing the videos is a very important component of this project. At our church we have a community wall. That is, we have bulletin boards that display news for and by the local community. Most of our church members read from this bulletin board. In fact, non-church members from the local community come to the church in order to read what is on the bulletin board so that they can be made aware of events and activities that will take place in the community.

Church members have been placed in what we call our church's "community group." Each member of the community group will be informed about the availability of the video. In addition, each community group member will be contacted individually to inform them regarding the video. Most of the community group members have email addresses or, at the very least, they have access to an email address. These individuals will be contacted through email about the availability of the video.

We will also have a set up that will allow us to collect a variety of data. This tool will allow us to gather information about a variety of things. For example, we will have the ability to know the number of individuals who have reviewed our website page, how

many church members versus visitors that visited the website page, the location of those who visited the page, etc. Also, there is a registration page (see Appendix C).

Site Member Features

The cost of the website is an issue that must be addressed. Those who are members of our church can become site members who will agree to pay a small fee so that the website can be maintained. The site members will register and pay a minimal membership fee. The membership fee will be billed on a 30-day cycle; the billing date will occur on the anniversary date of the subscribing site member. That is, the date that the site member subscribes to the website will be the monthly date that the individual will be billed. Membership to the website can be cancelled at any time that the member deems necessary. Normally, users will be able to view all the videos on the website except for those that are specific to a church group. However, users will have the ability to join any specific church group that they may choose.

Those who have an account will be able to view sermons and the video format. They will be able to write comments about what they have seen and heard on the video. This is very important information for us to know. However, it may be more important for the one who is watching the video. We anticipate that those who make comments would have engaged in reflective moments about how their lives relate to what they have seen or heard on the video. This experience is a time for the Holy Spirit to speak directly to the individual's heart.

Another feature of the website is that those who have an account will be able to share the information with others on social media such as Facebook or Twitter. They will be able to invite their friends or other relatives to the website. If they choose, they can use their lunch periods at work to invite their fellow workers to view the sermon that was

recently preached. If an individual decides to become a member of a community group, that individual will receive either a cell phone alert or an alert to the person's email address that they are now duly a member. This alert will come from one of the members of the church's administrative team. Please see the appendix for an outline of the registration (See Appendix C).

Administrative Features

The church's administrative team will have the ability to review all comments before they are displayed on the site. We realize that this feature is important because of the way society is today. That is, some individuals receive gratification from destroying that which is good and uplifting for members of society. Individuals would possibly place comments on the website that are not representative of positive Christian behavior. As such, we have chosen to monitor the website before comments are posted. We hasten to say that we will not refuse to place comments that simply disagree with what is stated in the video. Our only purpose is to ensure that vulgar language, ranting and raving, and other types of degrading comments do not downgrade the quality of this website.

All community groups that are to be created must be approved by the administration of the church. It is the administration of the church that will set up the church accounts the video categories and the permission for individuals to become part of the community group. The church administrative team is responsible to enable and disable any video. It has responsibility to also enable and disable any account holder of the website.

The administrative team will oversee the capacity of each video file (i.e. 100mb). The administrative team will set up various parameters within the website and it will determine when changes are made. The website will be able to determine the number of

users, the date and time the website is visited, the age range of the visited to the website, etc.

Work to be Done

There continues to be work that must be completed before the website is fully operational and efficient. It is important to us for this website to run at a very high proficiency level. Research and our experience suggest that when individuals are not successful the first time around, they tend not to try the system again. This is true especially in the technological age in which we live. Individuals expect perfection the first time. In order to address this issue, we will let individuals know in advance that the website may have difficulties but they are not to forgo using it. Our task is to do the best that we can so that the website can be used reasonably well.

The website professionals have compiled a list of things that must be done. Some of the things are relatively simple while others may be more complicated. Nevertheless, all of the items listed must be accomplished. It is in our plans to have numerous tests run done before the website is a public. We anticipate that our greatest adjustment will be made in the area of user friendliness. That is, we want users of the website to know and to feel that the website is friendly to them and that we are concerned about how they feel the website accomplishes this goal. Thus, it is to this end that we are enthusiastically making all attempts to set up the website as soon as possible (see Appendix D).

Our technologist specialist has created a design for the worship on demand program we will implement (See Appendix E). Each phase of the worship on demand has been carefully crafted by professionals who donated much of their time. Their donation of time and effort has allowed our church to use funds in other areas of ministry.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research Question One (Theological): What is the Biblical understanding of the assembling of the people of God?

Throughout the First Testament, there is an indication that humans engaged in worship experiences together. God laid down specific expectations of those who worshipped Him. Moses and other religious leaders related to the people God's expectations regarding the assembling of the people. The trend was continued in the Second Testament as well.

- What is the First Testament perspective regarding assembling of the people of God?
- What is the gospels' perspective regarding assembling of the people of God?
- What is the Second Testament perspective regarding assembling of the people of God?

Our Site Team determined that we needed to look at a variety of questions and concerns regarding worship. At the heart of our desire to worship God in spirit and truth is the notion that we are to worship God and glorify Him as revealed through His Son, Jesus Christ. Thus, we concluded that worship is at the center of our congregation's life. We believe that the chance of God speaking to an individual is significantly increased when a person is a part of the worship experience – physically present.

We are careful to note that the church is more than worship. However, it is our stance that new members will not grow, and older members will not advance if worship is not central to their overall Christian experience. Our Site Team arrived at the conclusion that the worship experience is the underpinning needed to expand and help other church ministries reach a heightened level of proficiency.

We believe that churches have the capacity to connect people with God, and thereby increase their spirituality. Church has the ability to compel and inspire worship so that it (worship) becomes the major means of bringing about that connection with God. If our church is to maintain viability in our community and denomination, we must do a better job of connecting and developing worship that connects to the needs of those we are seeking to reach.

We determined that it is important for us to recognize that we must not continue worship in the same manner because it is based on tradition. We cannot continue worship in the same manner just because it was comfortable for some to have it that way. Worship must be conducted in such a way that it meets the needs of a variety of individuals. Since society has changed, it stands to reason that there needs to be changes in the worship experience.

An apparent question to ask is, “Why do we need to focus on worship at this time.” In recent years, it is much more challenging for churches to see heightened attendance at church. That is, nationally every denomination is experiencing attendance decreases. Thus, it is a problem that will not go away simply be ignoring it. Right after

September 11, 2001, church attendance immediately rose. Sometime after in 2002, attendance started to go down again.⁴⁷

The story of Moses and Pharaoh is an interesting one. When God's servant, Moses, went to Pharaoh he did not ask Pharaoh for better working conditions, fairness, wages, or increased benefits. Those requests were certainly reasonable. However, Moses was asking for freedom to worship God. Moses gave this request to Pharaoh in Exodus 7, 8, 9, and 10. Frequently, Pharaoh replied with the answer, "No."

I am sure that Pharaoh looked at the request from an economical perspective. He was astute enough to know that as long as the Israelites were in Egypt, they were his (Pharaoh's) people - slaves. He concluded that if they were permitted to go into the desert, they then would become God's people. Perhaps Pharaoh knew that it is through worship that one can experience liberation.

Once the slaves of Egypt left, God taught them who to worship and what not to worship. For example, twenty percent of the Ten Commandments address worship: Exodus: 20:3

You shall have no other gods before Me.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the Lord your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates. For *in* six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that *is* in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

God's instruction continues: (Deuteronomy 12:31) - King James Version (KJV)

⁴⁷ Lovett Weems Jr., "No Shows," *Christian Century*, October 05, 2010, 10-11.

Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God: for every abomination to the Lord, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods.

The question that one must ask is whether the idol worships were so powerful that it could corrupt a people so deeply. Such questions can be found throughout the Old Testament Scriptures. Commandments regarding worship can be found in Joshua chapter 1 and Second Kings. It can also be found throughout the writings of the prophets. In addition, it can be found in various forms in the Psalms where one can sense the unity of God's people in the rhythm of Temple liturgy. Psalms 29:1–2 says the following:

Ascribe to the Lord, you heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due [God's] name; worship the Lord in the splendor of [God's] holiness.

By the time the Bible reader reaches the New Testament, it is evident that weekly worship in the synagogue and temple has reached the status that a devout life must have a part in worship. Thus, there is a commandment to worship weekly. Why?

What is it about worship that leads the God of the children of Israel to command them to worship Him and require the same of us today? Despite the fact that many Christians do not attend church on our regular weekly basis, it is nevertheless not optional with God. That is, the faithful people of God are required to worship him in spirit and in truth every week on a regular basis. The worship of the Lord Jesus Christ is not to be ignored by those who call themselves disciples of Jesus. An awe-aspiring passage in the Old Testament tells of the journey of his role from Egypt to Canaan as Joshua led them into the promise land.

By now, Joshua has grown old and is apparently near the end of his life. By this time he has seen just about everything. He has seen former slaves fight battles against the

Egyptians; he has seen how well organized his people could be; he witnessed the infidelity of the people of God and the miracles of God's protection; and he has seen how God made provisions for the children of Israel in the desert. Joshua witnessed the death of Moses, and he witnessed various conquests that secured Israel's future.

Joshua gathers the tribes around him one last time before sending them off to possess their land. During his speech, he reminds them of the faithfulness of God. I can only imagine that he reminded them how God views Moses to bring them from Egypt; how their parents were constantly disobedient to God. That is, Joshua reminds them of God's goodness and the people's ingratitude toward what God had done for them. Nevertheless, he challenges the people of God to be faithful to God and worship and serve the only true God in the future. He challenges them to make a choice about who they will serve. He provides them an example regarding his family and himself. He said:

Mountain View the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord. (Joshua 24:14–15).

Joshua astutely knew that if they were going to truly be a community bound together, they had to focus their attention on the worship of the true and living God. They could not have divided loyalties to the God who had brought them out of slavery and into a land that flowed with milk and honey. They could let nothing divide their attention from the God who had demonstrated love to the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They cannot allow the wealth of the land and the gods of the surrounding nations divide their attention from the requirements of God.

Part of the genius of Joshua was his recognition that worship and service are intertwined. That is, before Joshua let them go their way they had to commit to their common service to God and their promise to worship Him and Him alone. If they refused and breached this agreement, Joshua knew that they could never stand as a united nation. Ultimately, they would be overcome by their surrounding enemies. Thus, Joshua clearly states what he and his family planned to do. He states that he and his family will serve the Lord with all their heart and he invited his brothers and sisters to do the same.

Throughout Joshua's speech, he challenged them to worship and serve God. He related to them that this is the covenant that they should make with God before they go and possess the land. Thus, Joshua can be characterized as an effective worship leader.

Many who come to worship God today are looking for a sense of community as Joshua tried to provide for the children of Israel. Today, a sense of community in worship has become somewhat lost. People today are only concerned about their individual experience with God doing the worship hour. They are concerned only about their individual experience with God. However, this is not the true nature of biblical worship which focuses on a horizontal type of worship experience. True worship has the components of vertical and horizontal relationships; a relationship with God and with others in the congregation.

Worship reaches its epitome when our lives together experience praises and thanksgiving to God in a unified manner, when we confess our sins to God with common humility, and when the various voices are able to plan in a harmonious manner as an offering to God. When we can share sacred space together and dedicate ourselves to serve God, then we are entering into the worship experience that God desires.

Throughout the Bible, God calls his people to worship Him - and worship him alone. When we worship God alone, we pledge ourselves to be thankful to Him and to one another. The Ten Commandments represent how God accepts our worship and relationship to each other. For example, the first four commandments address our relationship to God. The last six addresses our relationship to each other. When we come before God to worship Him, he expects us to be in right relationship with both parts of those Ten Commandments. When we are in right relationship with God and with one another, we will grow toward the reflection of the one that we worship - God.

It is through worship that we become bonded into the community of faith. That is, upholding one another through the power of the Holy Spirit. We will welcome others into the fellowship so that their lives can become enriched by walking on the spiritual journey with us. Thus, we can conclude that we cannot grow spiritually and be fateful disciples apart from the worship experience.

It is important for the Christian church to constantly be reminded why it exists. Before leaving the earth, Jesus gave what is called “the great commission.” The great commission says that it is our responsibilities as “disciples” of Christ to preach the gospel to the entire world. That is, worship must also include being concerned about those who are not yet members of the household of faith. With this perspective in mind, our Site Team decided that we did not need to do what most churches do regarding worship. That is, many churches take note from the “inside” to the “outside.” They look at who they are, and what they do, rather than looking at it from the opposite direction.

Our Site Team decided that our approach would be to look at our worship from the “outside” to the “inside.” This was done in order to consider those we are trying to

reach as well as those we are trying to keep. With the “great commission” in mind our Site Team decided that we needed to ask several questions regarding worship and those who are not members of our fellowship. We asked:

- What questions do people have as they come and worship with us? What concerns do they have about religion, God, Jesus Christ, or the community? What are their values?
- Do they feel fulfilled after visiting our church and having gone through the worship experience? For example, many churches say they want to have more young people in their congregation. Yet, the worship style is the same as it was 40 or 50 years ago. Some congregations have little or no technology. Yet, young people live in an age in which technology is second - nature to them; they use it every day of their lives.

Post worship focus group session.

Using open-ended questions, our Site Team decided that we should have discussions with visitors after a meal was served after church. The focus group would be asked in advance whether they wanted to participate. At this meal, Site Team members decided to make the focus group experience as friendly and non-rigid as possible.

Following are questions that were generally discussed at the post focused group session:

- How is our worship similar to that of your own church period?
- If you do not belong to a church, what impressed you most about our worship?
- If you do not belong to a church, what things were turn-offs to you?
- If you belong to another church, what things impressed you most about our church worship?
- If you belong to another church, what things were turn offs to you during our worship service?
- What do we need to do to improve our worship service?
- Is there anything about our worship service that you would never change?

- Was there anything about our worship service that surprised you?
- What was most inspiring about our worship service?
- What was the least inspiring about our worship service?
- Would you invite others to attend a worship service?
- Which one of the following would you rank our church service?

Great Okay Needs improvement Terrible

Over a period of six months, we collected data from the post worship focus group sessions. The data revealed that most people stated that we needed to improve our worship. A total of 197 focus group surveys were collected. That is, after we engaged in qualitative discussions we asked participants to complete a survey. We found that the surveys were generally aligned with statements made during the focus group sessions.

One area that was consistent throughout the focus group discussions and survey was the idea that the worship service should be somewhat shortened. We did not ask the age group of those who participated. Thus, it is not known whether the youth or older adults were more concerned about the length of the service. However there was little specificity given regarding what should be taken out of the service or whether certain aspects of the worship activities were too long.

Prior to the 1980's, Americans did not consider personal computers to be a necessity. Companies such as IBM took advantage of that idea and allowed entrepreneurs to develop innovative types of technology without much competition. Entrepreneurs such as Steve Jobs for Apple and Bill Gates for Microsoft were able to carve a huge amount of the market share. Bill Gates was insistent on the notion that one had to create a need and then provide a vehicle that would fulfill that need. As a result of that kind of thinking, Bill Gates became one of the richest men in the world. As a young man, Gates

realized that success did not depend on simply having a good product, but he discovered that he had to have a product that satisfies people's needs. Those needs can be real or perceived needs.

Over a period of time people's needs tend to fluctuate back and forth. As these needs fluctuate back and forth at some point society validates those needs. According to Berger and Luckman⁴⁸ our society has emerged into a culture that supports "plausibility structures" that undergird society's actions. That is, structures direct people toward determining what is credible or what is not credible. It is believed that in the past plausibility structures did not have a significant impact on today's modern church; however, Peter Berger believes that all has changed. Berger contends, in *The Sacred Canopy*, that the church is among other institutions that are competing for the allegiance of humans.⁴⁹ It was concluded that the church, along with other institutions, must align itself with the fluctuating plausibility structures if it is going to survive. As a result of this information, many churches are trying to use contemporary means to solidify an increase church membership and attendance. Church services have a definite contemporary flavor coupled with charismatic tendencies.

A well-known and credible researcher, George Barna, says the following:

Yet, as we prepared to enter into a new century of ministry, we must address one inescapable conclusion: despite the activity and chutzpah emanating from thousands of congregations, the Church in America is losing influence and adherents faster than any other major institution in the nation. Unless a radical solution for the revival of the Christian Church

⁴⁸ Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 154-155. Berger and Luckmann have defined "plausibility structures" to mean "certain socially validated, continually fluctuating infrastructures."

⁴⁹ Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy; Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), 48.

in the United States is adopted and implemented soon, the spiritual hunger of Americans will either go unmet or be satisfied by other faith groups.⁵⁰

Thus, it seems to be a paradox that is being raised for today's modern church. The church must decide whether it will fall in line with Berger's premise that messages need to be adapted to meet the needs and desires of constituent members. Or do churches follow the biblical models and cling to the biblical imperative as understood in the traditional manner?

Literature Review

Churches today have made tremendous changes than in years past. First, the composition and structure of the church has changed over the years. For example, a large church in the past did not exceed over five hundred or so members; it did not have multiple pastors, neither an extensive support staff. Today, the church is quite the opposite. It consists of thousands and thousands of members, multiple pastors with various ministries, and an extensive support staff. Because of time restraints demanded by the congregation, the average service for church lasts about an hour; the sermon itself is about 25 minutes long. According to Anderson, people are “reached through small groups, discovery classes [discussion on spiritual matters], affinity evangelism, counseling, and a variety of constantly changing approaches.”⁵¹

When analyzing attendance issues in the church, it is important to see how the church has changed. Years ago one could refer to a church as being a “typical church.” That notion no longer exists. According to George Barna, church today generally falls into one of three categories. Namely, a small church that consists of less than 100

⁵⁰ George Barna, *The Second Coming of the Church* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1998), 1.

⁵¹ Leith Anderson, *Dying for Change* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1990), 14.

members; it serves the local surrounding community. The second category is a church that has two to four hundred members; it seeks to grow numerically. The third category is one referred to as a mega-church which has over 1000 members; this church offers a wide variety of programs to meet many needs of the people.⁵²

This new wave of church structure has impacted the leadership of churches. That is pastors and their roles and responsibilities have changed. In the past a pastor was expected to preach the word of God from week to week; the pastor's leadership role was not as crucial to the success of the church as it is today. As a result, there was a tremendous rise in the spiritual gifts of the church. The idea of the priesthood of all believers became prominent within the Christian faith. Thus, it was believed that members were to do much more than they were doing.⁵³

Cultural Changes

There have been changes in America's culture. It has significantly impacted the church. As a result, older church members today as well as new converts to the faith act, think, look and express themselves very differently than they did years ago. For example, years ago a member would take a pastor at his word and not challenge his statements. Today, everyone tends to challenge the pastor and they tend to challenge his authority. This shift has greatly affected the modern-day church. That is, there has been a major shift in our culture. The shift in the culture has found its way through the halls in the pews of the local church. They are three major areas, culturally speaking, that has had the

⁵² George Barna, *Second Coming of the Church*, 15-17.

⁵³ Barna, *Second Coming*, 102, 107.

greatest impact our churches. These include: the mass media, consumerism, and our changing demographics.

The Impact of Mass Media

Years ago, it took hours or days to get news of something that had happened in other parts of the world. Most television stations signed off at around 1:00 a.m. each morning. Then, the 24 hour news stations came into existence. This significantly revolutionized the way the news media was able to keep people informed about what was happening locally, nationally, and internationally. People began to say that the world was becoming a “local global market.” Today, we can see that that idea has truly become a reality. There is instantaneous communication. Increases in technology has opened the door for our youth to be entertained by MTV, video games, CD ROM’s (outdated now), computers, DVD’s, the Internet, and other media. For example, the typical cell phone has many uses today. According to George Bohne, the average teenager spends roughly 7 of their 17 waking hours with some type of media. Yet, most churches failed to use technology as a part of the religious activities of the church.⁵⁴

Today’s congregation needs to be ministered to in different ways than in the past. This is true because the media continues to play such a dominant role in influencing consumers’ expectations. For example, marketing experts know that a mediated mind is one that consists of instantaneous gratification. They also know that humans are adapted to see results more quickly than they did in the past. Many pastors do not have the opportunity to have a second chance if they fail to make significant impressions on members when they attend church on Sunday. This is a daunting task for pastors. Pastors

⁵⁴ Barna, *Second Coming*, 64.

have to design competition with sitcoms that last for 30 minutes. That is, a situation or problem is presented and within 30 minutes the problem is resolved. The person watching the sitcom is able to be entertained and almost instantly have any imaginable problem resolved within that 30 minute time limit. Neil Postman asked the question: “Do we destroy our religious faith by trying to make it more entertaining?”⁵⁵

The Impact of Consumerism

The wide-use of technology in our society has caused individuals to place high demands on all institutions; the church is not exempt. The use of technology and marketing has caused individuals to strive to get the greatest and latest of whatever is being offered. Consumerism has impacted the church in a negative way. Robert Bellah states the following: “Religion has been invaded by the market mentality, so that it has become in many instances another consumer good. Consumer Christians shop for the church that is most convenient for their needs and switch, as casually as they change brands of dishwater detergent, if they think they can get a better package deal elsewhere.”⁵⁶ Church members are quickly looking for a full-service church

That can offer quality and variety in music, extensive youth programs, diverse educational opportunities, a counseling staff, support groups, singles’ ministry, athletic activities, multiple Sunday morning services, a modern nursery, and other services and programs only available in larger churches.⁵⁷

Worship

A key question for me is what is worship? Individuals draw definitions of worship from biblical sources as well as from human experiences. Anthropology even offers a

⁵⁵ Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 124.

⁵⁶ Robert Bellah, *The Good Society* (New York: Random House, 1991), 183.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 51.

generic description of what worship is. It points out that there are similarities among humans to reach out for a being higher than themselves. However, there are major differences between how Christians worship and how pagans worship. According to Frederick Schroeder, “Worship at its highest and best is the act of giving to God the glory and honor that are His due, without regard to any personal satisfaction or benefit accruing from the act of adoration.”⁵⁸ Christian worship is intended to lead us to review ourselves in light of the nature of God and his knowledge of us. When we worship in this way, we recognize God as the source of all. Therefore, He is the initiator of worship as well. When we worship, we simply reach out in response to His divine initiative.

While in worship, we express and demonstrate a radical loyalty to God that surpasses all efforts, things, and actions. It is an experience of self-giving, of relationship development, and renewal. Worship is total adoration to God. Often, when things are repeated, human nature tends to reduce things to its mechanistic composition. The prophets of the Old Testament denounced this type of worship. The prophets known for their greatest denunciation of this type of worship were Isaiah, Micah, Amos, and Hosea. Jesus denounced this type of worship as well (Matt 6:7).

As we worship God, we must always be mindful of profound quality that God has attributed to Himself. That quality is His Holiness. Even though the idea of holiness carries elements of mystery, we should never lose sight of the fact that purity is always present. God provided a Holiness code in Leviticus 19. It is there that God establishes Himself as the true and only model for holiness. It is because of the holiness of God that we are to adore Him. Our imperfection stands in contrast and violation of His nature,

⁵⁸ Frederick Schroeder, *Worship in the Reformed Tradition* (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1966), 78-79.

which made it necessary for reconciliation which was achieved by Jesus at the cross of Calvary.

The worship experience is ultimately one that is personal. Nevertheless, it is to be expressed in a corporate manner. God not only focuses on worshiping individuals, but He focuses on us as a worshiping people - the gathering of believers. This type of worship is profiled in a very high manner in both the old and New Testament time.

Many things transformed early Christian worship into its medieval expression of worship; it continues to influence our worship today. There are basically three forms of worship: (1) worship that is the theocentric (the adoration of God); (2) worship must concur with sound theology (Biblical principles); (3) and worship must be patterned after biblical norms.

As a worship leader at my church, I must review the basic worship types that are in existence among Christian churches today. I must decide which of these types or a combination of them meet our need. The four basic types are as follows:

- Liturgical - it focuses around the sacraments.
- Semi-liturgical - it gives increased attention to the preached word and music.
- Free worship - preaching is central and prayers are given extemporaneously.
- Contemporary - a variety of experimental approach is to worship are used to capture the modern mind; traditional worship experiences are generally discarded.

Despite what worship type is used in our church, we must remember that worship is profoundly God-centered. The corporate service is to be orderly but not scripted to the point that it cannot be veered from.

Revelation

Modern theologians and laypersons today view the Old Testament as a mysterious and apparently irrelevant book. It is from the Old Testament that we learn about temple worship, the sacrificial system, and about the priesthood. These three entities were at the very heart of worship and therefore we must learn about their relevance to New Testament times and teaching. There are many books written about Christian worship and it focuses on what people said or did during the New Testament times. Seldom do those books focus on worship during the Old Testament time, which is our foundation.

A theology of worship should consider three main themes espoused in the Bible. These include: Revelation, redemption, and God's covenant with his chosen people, Israel. Therefore, it is important to briefly discuss each of the above entities as it relates to worship. An understanding of them will help to understand worship in the Old Testament, New Testament, and worship today.

The great concern of people who lived in the ancient world was to know where a god lived, where that god could be found, and how could they know the names of those gods. As a result of seeking of the gods, certain locations became known as places where the gods dwelt. Altars were directed and built as a result and the people began to establish various patterns of worship. If people found several sanctuaries dedicated to the same god, it was generally recognized and accepted that those of the sanctuaries were mere copies of the gods real dwelling places.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ An example of a sanctuary legend during the time of the New Testament can be found in Acts 19:35 the great Temple of the goddess Artemis at Ephesus and Asia Minor, shows the image of the goddess. This place that houses the image of the goddess came to be known as one of the Seven Wonders of the World. The legend was that this had fallen from heaven. As a result, it was believed that the temple and its cult were established in Ephesus and the city came to be regarded as "guardian of the temple."

Even in places and cultures where no prominence was given to elaborate temples or sacred places, just knowing the place where a god's presence could be was found to be extremely important to the people. For example, the people of Canaan among whom the Israelites came to dwell had their own flourishing religion. It involved many simple sanctuaries dedicated to the gods of Baal, E L, and Anat. According to one tradition, these gods were believed to have had a dwelling place on a particular sacred mountain. It was believed that at some inaccessible point heaven and earth met.⁶⁰ Thus, it was believed that it was from such mountains that the people were able to rule over the land and have an influence upon the life of the community in which it lived.

The Old Testament clearly shows that the distinctive feature of the God of the Old Testament was superior to other gods. As God revealed Himself, He demonstrated that he was more than just a display of power in nature and that He was a God who could demonstrate more than a supernatural phenomenon.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob built altars throughout Canaan in order to mark the sites where God manifested Himself to them on the various names and titles (e.g. Gen. 12:7-8; 13:14-18; 28:10-22). Thus, when sacrifices were to be made, they were to be made at specific spots. Convenience was not a consideration.⁶¹

When this was done, it was a demonstration that God's promises were believed by individuals who receive them. It was a belief that the land actually belonged to them and that God will give it to people at the time so pointed by Him. Because heaven was regarded as an actual dwelling place (Genesis 11:5; 18:21; 21:17; 22:11; 24: 7; and

⁶⁰ R. J. Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 34-97.

⁶¹ W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia; Westminster, 1961), 102.

28:12), it was not conceived that God was limited to that sacred place. Instead, He simply chose to manifest Himself, His character and His will for his people at that specific site. As the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, He was also linked to other persons and places. Thus, “the religion of the patriarchs shows a real personal communion between men and the deity who acted as their leader.”⁶²

God decided to manifest His glory to the former slaves at a place identified as Mount Sinai. He did this after He miraculously delivered His people from Egyptian bondage. Providentially, God determined that the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob should travel over a desert area and be rescued by God performing miracles at various times. For example, the miracle of deliverance across the Red Sea and the provision of manna provided by God demonstrated who He was.

Some have identified Mount Sinai as the mountain of God’s inheritance. Scripture declares that it is the dwelling place for God to dwell (Exodus 3:1; 4:27; 18:5; 24:13). It was at this place and at this time that the scope of worship was presented. Also, God revealed His plan regarding relationship to Him and the Israelites as His people. The above motif can be found throughout the rest of the Old Testament.

Redemption

Worship in the Bible is distinct from others who worship their god. That is, worship in the Bible is offered by those who have been redeemed by God. Therefore, acceptable worship to God does not start with human invention or intuition. Rather, it is the result of the action of God. The earlier written books of the Bible place an emphasis on God’s initiative in revealing His character and His will to His people. It shows how

⁶² R. E. Clements, *God and Temple* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), 16.

God rescues them in order to serve Him exclusively. Nevertheless, scholars have been able to demonstrate many parallels that exist among the people of God and other Old Testament religious practices - those of other nations.

God made a significant revelation of Himself at Mount Sinai and at Mount Horeb. It was a time He united the twelve Tribes of Israel. As a result, Israel was able to sense a special presence of God wherever they went. The Israelites saw God as a God who did something special for them and as a result they saw themselves as a special people of God. Because they viewed God as a holy God, it was their desire and ambition to become holy as God was holy.⁶³

The book of Exodus is especially important in establishing a theology of worship because it provides a clear connection between one's approaches to God as revealed in His redemptive purpose for the Israelites. The book of Exodus not only provides an understanding of worship in the Old Testament, but it is foundational to really understanding of worship in the New Testament.

The early chapters of the book of Exodus imply that the Israelites were involved in a pilgrimage to meet God at a specific place and at a specific time. The narrative of the story indicates that God liberated His people from slavery in Egypt so that they could engage in Divine worship of the God who had delivered them. We read in Exodus 3 that God met with Moses on a mountainside before He led Moses to be the leader of His people. When He met with Moses, He assured Moses that His people would be delivered from slavery in Egypt and that they would possess land that their forefathers had discussed and passed down through the ages. It was on the mountain that God revealed a

⁶³ A. S. Herbert, *Worship in Ancient Israel*, Ecumenical Studies in Worship no. 5 (London: Lutterworth, 1959), 8.

special name that the Israelites were to call Him (Exodus 3:13-15). The English translation represents that name as “LORD.”

The story unfolds by informing readers that when the redemption from Egypt was accomplished, God had Moses to gather the people at the foot of Mount Sinai. We are informed that Moses went up in the mountain to meet God. It was in this mountaintop experience that God instructed Moses to remind the Israelites how the Lord had marvelously and graciously brought them to Himself by performing mighty acts in their behalf while they were in Egypt, as they were preparing to leave Egypt, and as they crossed the Red Sea (Exodus 19:3-4). Subsequently, Moses was told to declare to the people assembled what it meant to be called out of Egypt by God and what His expectations were of them. Moses was to let the people know that God had established a special covenant with them.

Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all the nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex. 19:5-6).

The terminology used in the above Scripture suggests that there was to be an engagement with God that was to be unique. At Sinai, God ordered a total life pattern of service and worship. God had put his name, reputation, and character on the line in order to redeem the Israelites. What God expected from them was the worship of the only true and living God.

God used three terms to describe Israel’s special relationship with Him. He called them “my treasured possession,” “a kingdom of priests,” and “a holy nation.” This indicates that God expected His people to be separate from other nations and to be united as God’s people. That is, they were to be a part of a special and sanctified relationship

with God that would be the envy of other nations. They were to be the model chosen to demonstrate what it means to be under the direct rule of God. Actually, this is “the biblical plan for the whole world.”⁶⁴ This was the means that God used to implement His promise to Abraham by bringing blessing to all nations who would enact what He had promised the Israelites (Genesis 12:1-3). Because they were holy people and a priestly kingdom, they were to serve the Lord exclusively and acknowledge Him as their only true God and He would acknowledge them as His people. It was God’s plan to display to the rest of the world who and what God is like. “Just as a priest is separated from an ancient society in order to serve it and serves it by his distinctiveness, so Israel serves her world by maintaining her distance and her difference from it.”⁶⁵

The remainder of Exodus chapter 19 addresses special preparations of the children of Israel as they were about to have an encounter with God and the account of an actual theophany of God to them. Moses was instructed to set boundaries around the mountain for the protection of the people and the animals and he was given special instructions relative to the approach the people were to take. If the people failed to follow God’s specific instructions and severe warnings by breaking those boundaries, death would be imminent for them.

God established the fact that the people were to be ritually pure as they approached the true and living God. That is, they were to approach God on His terms and at His mountain. The people were required by God to refrain from worldly laboring care and only to possess devotional thoughts about God. To assist in this process God required

⁶⁴ W. J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: An Old Testament Theology* (Exeter, Devon: Paternoster, 1984), 87.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 90.

His people to wash their clothes. This was designed to establish the fact that people must come before God with reverence. God's awesome display demonstrated with great imagery that the power of God is supernatural and indescribable. It was here that God used His majestic holiness to confront the children of Israel and intrude into their lives. It was here that God interrupted their lives so that they could see His power and glory.

Exodus chapter 20 reinforces the notion that God was not a casual God or like the gods of the other nations. Their God was One who gave them Ten Words or the Ten Commandments to be an integral part of their relationship with Him. The Ten Commandments stated the fundamental principles of living in right relationship with God who graciously brought them out of the land of Egypt and brought them to a land flowing with milk and honey. God called them to have exclusive devotion to Him and they were called to avoid all idolatry, be sanctified by His name, and observe the Sabbath (Ex. 20:1-11). These first words emphasized Israel's relationship to her God. That is, Israel was to have no other God, she was not to take his name in vain, she was not to bow down to anyone but God, and there was a specific time that God determined that the Israelites should worship him.

After establishing the right relationship with God, it can be assumed that the Israelites would have a right relationship with each other. In order for this to happen, God specifically gave instruction about human relationship to one another. That is, they were to have a right relationship with God and with their fellow human beings. The relationship was to be vertical and horizontal. Interestingly, this vertical and horizontal relationship is the shape of a cross of Calvary.

The ratification of the covenant is recorded in Exodus chapter 24. It can be seen in the sequence that starts with the invitation to Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and 70 elders of the Israelites. These individuals were invited to “come up to the Lord” and to “worship at a distance.” Only Moses was permitted to approach God directly. As a precursor to the anticipated encounter with God, Moses built an altar with twelve pillars that represented the twelve tribes of Israel. He offered sacrifices, recited things from the book of the covenant and he sprinkled sacrificial blood on the altar and people.

As it was mentioned earlier, it is crucial to understand the theology of worship in the Old Testament if one is to understand the theology of worship in the New Testament. It is important to understand the notion that the one true and living God of heaven and earth took the initiative to make Himself known. First, He made Himself known to the patriarchs of Israel and then to the events of the Exodus from Egypt. Next, there was an encounter at Mount Sinai so that the whole nation of Israel could have a glance as to who God is. The book of Exodus declares that God rescued His people from slavery in Egypt so that they could leave that land and worship Him exclusively. That is, they were redeemed from Egyptian bondage in order to engage with God. At first, they would engage with God at Mount Sinai, then in the wilderness of wandering, and finally in the land which flowed with milk and honey - God’s gift to them.

God developed a whole system of worship for the Israelites; namely, the tabernacle and temple. These were designed to be a means of acknowledging and living in the right relationship to God and acknowledging his holy presence wherever they were. The Israelites were taught that if they obeyed God and lived in right relationship with Him they were to also do it with the other Israelites. Thus, the Israelites were in a

covenant relationship with God that extended itself to a covenant relationship with their fellow believers in the one true and living God.

When Israel failed to engage with God in the way that He had required - the Ten Commandments - He dealt with them with terrible judgments—they were people who were exiled. Yet, there was a prophetic hope for the restoration of Israel and that the blessings of other nations through the Israelites would ultimately come to pass. Thus, there was hope that the Israelites would one day be restored to their glory. The implication of this hope remains encouraging for a Christian theology of worship.

Worship and the New Testament Gospel

As you come to him, the living Stone-rejected by mere tools but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ... You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Peter 2:4-5, 9, NIV modified).

From the book of Genesis down to the book of Revelation, it is demonstrated that acceptable worship to God means approaching or engaging with God on the terms that He proposes and in the manner that He makes worship acceptable. It means that worshipers are to honor Him, serve Him, respect Him, and abandon any idol or devotional attributes that would hinder the exclusive worship and relationship with God. Worship then, can be seen as a fundamental expression of faith in obedience and adoration to God. Thus, in both the Old and New Testaments it is often demonstrated to be a personal and moral fellowship with God that is relevant to every aspect of one's life.

God is worthy of our praise, our commitments, loyalty, and expressions of gratitude. He is worthy of these things because He is our Creator, our provider, and protector. Throughout Scriptures God condemns religions that are created and devised by

human beings. It is impossible for human-created religions to bring others into the right relationship with God. Because sin is in the world, it is God's plan that we are to be rescued from the darkness and the power of sin. The only way this can happen is that one must have a true knowledge of God and they must worship God in the manner He prescribes. It can be seen throughout the Old Testament that God insisted that the only way the Israelites could be drawn close to Him was for her to follow in the path of obedience. It was because of His gracious initiative to bring Israel out of slavery and the provisions He gave her that Israel was able to stand as a nation. It was to this group of individuals that God uniquely revealed His character, His will, and demonstrated his omnipotence by delivering them out of the hand of the Egyptians. Thus, revelation and redemption are the basis of acceptable worship to God.

God had revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Later, He would reveal Himself to the Israelites through His servants Moses and Joshua. There were three entities in which God made Himself known to His people. He made Himself known at Mount Sinai, the tabernacle in the wilderness, and at the Temple in Jerusalem. It is here that God gave His word and the people were to receive it and they were to share His word with the rest of the world. However, the Israelites were unfaithful in their duty. Had the Israelites been faithful to the plan God had for them, the whole world would have known about the true and living God. But instead, the Israelites wanted to keep their knowledge of God and the blessings of God within their encampment.

The Bible reveals the fact that Israel became a corrupt nation. She began to compromise with other nations by incorporating their religions and their practices into her worship. This caused God to send Divine judgments upon the Israelites. The Israelites

had the idea that God wanted to bless only them as a nation. But the presence of Jesus into our world demonstrated that God wanted to bless the entire world. For example, when He met the woman at the well He brought to her salvation and talked to her about worship. Before leaving the earth in Acts chapter one, Jesus told His disciples that they were to preach His word in Jerusalem, in Samaria, and into the uttermost part of the earth. In other words, they were to take the gospel throughout the entire world so that the world would come into the right fellowship with God and worship Him as he desired for them to worship Him. Therefore, acceptable worship is an important aspect of biblical eschatology.

The apostle Peter eloquently asserts that Jesus is “the living Stone.” He was rejected by humans on the earth, but was chosen by God and He therefore was very precious to God. Paul also indicates that the fulfillment of the Old Testament hopes in the person and work of Jesus is something that future generations should hold on to. For he declares that: God is building a new “spiritual house” with Jesus as the chief cornerstone of that house (Eph. 2:20).

When Christians reflect on the idea of worship, it must start with Jesus. At the center of New Testament thinking about worship is the Savior of the world - Jesus Christ. It is Jesus who is the ultimate meeting point between heaven and earth; He is the meeting point between the Old and New Testament. Jesus is the meeting point between sin and righteousness. It is Jesus who is the meeting point between life and death. Thus, Jesus is the One who reconciled humanity back to God. He is the focus of salvation and He is the desire of all nations - the blessing for all nations.

As one reads the Bible it indicates that the early disciples had grown into a worshiping relationship with God. At another level it seems that Jesus made possible a new relationship with the Father by means of His death, resurrection and ascension. It is through the Lord Jesus Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit that the Heavenly Father is able to obtain true worshipers. Thus, at the very center of Christian theology of worship is the notion of the Trinity. That is, each member of the Godhead plays a significant role in the establishment of appropriate worship.

One of the main reasons for Christian worship is for the edification of the people of God by building up the body of Christ. When Christians gather they are able to minister to one another, exhort each other, and teach the word of God by using the gifts that God has given by the Holy Spirit. Whether we say return the tithe, or just be present in church, we should do so with the intent of edifying God and each other. This, however, is not a human activity or invention. It is God at work in the midst of His people letting His presence be known as they edify Him. Edification comes from Christ who is the head of the church. He works hand-in-hand with the Holy Spirit so that edification can be expressed. It is through worship that we are to draw on the resources of Christ and the Holy Spirit so that we can leave that place of worship with a better relationship with our Heavenly Father.

Theologically, some feel that the gathering of the people of God at church-worship is meant to be in anticipation of the heavenly assembly of God's people. They believe that it is to be characterized by worship in the form of a divine service or prayer of praise directed to God or in the form of ministry to one another. Worship and edification are different dimensions of the same sort of activity. In other words,

participation in the edification of the church is an important aspect of the obedience of faith which is the worship of God under the new covenant. In addition, others might see worship is a time simply to meet to encourage one another to live a day in their lives totally dedicated to God by obeying Him. We feel that this will glorify God and it will carry out God's purpose in this world.

Knowledge and understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ is crucial if one is to have a balanced sense and understanding of what New Testament worship is about. One needs to understand it from its historical perspective which means that one must read the Old Testament and understand it as well.

In the lives of many people today, they go to church and testify that it is the high point of their week. However, it is not the only time when they meet together or is engaged in some type of ministry. Their prayers, their songs, and contribution are mere indicators of a right relationship with God and perhaps with their fellow human beings. True worship leads one from selfish thoughts, selfish desires to be with God, and it leads one to think about others. Therefore, true worship leads one to get involved in evangelism, social action groups, pastoral care, visitation ministry, nursing home ministry, prison ministry, etc.

A congregation must decide whether it wants to please itself, its pastor, its church boards, or does it want to please God. In order for it to please God it must assess itself. It must do this on a regular and ongoing basis; it must do it as often as is needed. If one is to worship God, He desires for that individual to worship Him, that person must self-assess. The self-assessment may be extremely painful and it may reveal some things that can discourage the individual. In a similar manner, a congregation needs self-reflection as

well. During the period of self-reflection, the church may have things revealed about it that are not pleasant or it may have things revealed about it that will cause it to doubt. Despite the consequences, it is important to self-reflect, be honest, and come up with a plan whereby things can improve.

This has been the role of the Site Team and me. We want to truly improve our worship in our congregation. For this to happen, we are honest with ourselves, with our findings, and we are honest enough to know that we will not have the answers or solutions overnight. However, we want to move in the direction of bringing about a solution. This project is part of that solution. Our “worship on demand” idea is designed to help our congregation move forward and in the end it will benefit others. By others, I mean those who are not part of the congregation. It will help those in the local community.

It is our purpose to help our membership gain a deeper relationship with God through the worship experience. We acknowledge that there is not anything miraculous about the worship experience except the presence of God is there. In order for this to happen, we must be like the children of God of old, the apostles, and other Christians in the New Testament. We must be willing to do whatever God says do, and do not allow contemporary thoughts, ideas, and actions to hinder us from doing what God would have us to do. We realize that it is going to take courage, prayer, and an “upper room” experience in order for things to be in place as God would have them be in place. Despite the challenges, we are committed to move forward with this project because we have a clearer understanding of worship from the Old Testament perspective and that of the New Testament.

Culture

Research Question Two (Cultural): What role, if any, does culture play in the spiritual development of a Christian?

The values, patterned ways of thinking, beliefs, actions and feeling are learned by an individual and are subsequently transmitted to others. Youth culture embodies norms and values shared by other members of the adolescent society. There are subcultures within the adolescent society that are in a constant state of flux. Were there cultural influences that First Testament prophets and leaders had to address? Were there cultural influences that Jesus had to address? Were there cultural influences that Second Testament leaders had to address?

Now that we have reached the 21st century, American evangelicals find themselves in a society that is very diverse and has a pluralistic culture. In our society today, there are many things that compete for individual's attention and allegiance. These philosophies or ideas are the results of philosophical and cultural changes. These changes have come to define and redefine our culture and lifestyle. For example, the idea of pluralism suggests that any worldview that one may have is correct and that it is to be tolerated by all other individual. Today, our culture says that absolutes have lost its reason to exist. It is postulated that only science, not religion, can be trusted because science has facts on its side. In this diverse society in which we live, Christianity has become no more than an odd type of troublesome pain. As a result of all of this, our Western culture is profoundly suffering. An eminent scholar and former missionary to

India, Lesslie Newbigin, places great emphasis on this point by asking the question: “can the West be converted?”⁶⁶

A question such as the one above leads to another question. That is, how are Christians to live in this modern world or new found culture in which we reside? Or another question might be: should Christians live within the realm of our culture or are we to try and change what impacts the culture? Thus, the center of this discussion is the term “culture.” Therefore it deserves particular attention in terms of trying to understand what it means. It is used frequently in many different contexts and its actual meaning can be elusive or confusing. For sure, it does not refer to a particular level of life. That is, culture sometimes is referred to by some as “high culture.”

E. A. Hoebel, an anthropologist, says that culture “is the integrated system of learned behavior pattern which are characteristic of the members of a society and of which are not the result of biological inheritance.”⁶⁷ Theologian, Donald Bloesch, declares that culture “is the task appointed to humans to realize their destiny in the world in service to the glory of God.”⁶⁸ The eminent theologian, Emil Brunner, says that “culture is the materialisation of meaning.”⁶⁹ All of the above definitions might be combined to include the various worldviews or fold philosophies of our present day society.

⁶⁶ Lesslie Newbigin, “Can the West be Converted,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 11 (October 1987): 355-68.

⁶⁷ E. A. Hoebel, *Anthropology: The Study of Man*, 3rd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 5.

⁶⁸ Donald Bloesch, *Freedom of Obedience* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 54.

⁶⁹ Emil Brunner, *Christianity and Civilization* (London: Nisbet, 1948), 62.

The above definitions might shed light on why church attendance is so very low today in America. It would be prudent for Christians to analyze and observe modern-day culture and make decisions regarding what our proper actions and reactions should be to the culture that we observe. Harry Blamires declares the following: “no full Christian can contemplate and analyze the tensions all about us in both public and private life without sensing the eternal momentousness this of the current struggle for the human mind between Christian teaching and materialistic secularism.”⁷⁰

As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we cannot say that we will not be a part of the battle. As one reviews the history of the Christian church, it is clearly demonstrated that there have been struggles for Christians to fight the battle of culture. Once again, questions arise. For example, what should be the stance of Christians? Is it to be inside the culture? Is it to be outside the culture? Or, are we to ignore culture altogether? Still further, are we to isolate ourselves from the culture in which we live? And finally, are we to try to transform culture?

According to Richard Niebuhr, there are five fundamental views Christians should take regarding culture. The first view includes “Christ against culture.” The second view speaks of “the Christ of culture.” His third view observes “the Christ above culture.” His fourth view describes a dual application when he talks about “Christ and culture in paradox.” And fifth, he talks about Christ “the transformer of culture.”⁷¹

As discerners of what is happening in our world, it is an opportunity for Christians to be vehicles of the needed transformation of culture. In order for us to be

⁷⁰ Harry Blamires, *Recovering the Christian Mind* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1988), 10.

⁷¹ Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), 32.

effective transformers, we as a Christian people need to know what needs to be transformed and what does not need to be transformed. With all of the influences in the world it is quite challenging to discern between the two. Thus, Christians need the guidance of God's word, the Holy Spirit, the help of Angels, and wisdom and experience we have gained through the years.

If we are truly going to be transformers of our culture we must understand and be prepared to accept the fact that a large part of our culture will see us as being intolerant, antiquated, out of date, out of touch, uncompassionate, and destructors of the status quo. One can expect that the result of this would be that Christians will be persecuted through social ostracism, ridiculed, put in a negative light by the media, entertainers will portray the Christian faith in a very negative manner, and a host of other negative attitudes and portrayal of Christians will be manifested. For example, if Jesus said today: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the father, but through me" (John 14:6), most people in the world will see this as an absolute and exclusive statement; it would therefore be rejected by our modern-day culture. But the fact is that Jesus said it nearly 2000 years ago, and that truth remains. Therefore, in order to "water down" what Jesus said, individuals try to give a different interpretation of the statement. But Christians cannot allow this to happen. We cannot change the word of God or its interpretation simply to appease our culture.

The Christian faith is not just a set of nebulous beliefs or personal opinions. Rather, it is an objective truth. That is, the tenets of the Christian faith are positive ones that are objective in nature. Therefore, we must stand up to societal pressures and the culture of our day and keep the tenets of the Christian faith alive. We must not allow our

society and culture to influence us to believe that it has the facts. There is only one set of facts - that is the word of God (the Bible). We cannot allow ourselves to be deluded to believe that God has changed His mind because culture has changed over the years.

Our public proclamation of the gospel must also be supported by the private lives that we live. That is, our worship experiences may suggest one thing and our private lives suggest still, another. Lesslie Newbigin suggests: "We come here to what is perhaps the most distinctive and crucial feature of the modern world view, namely the division of human affairs into two realms-- the private and the public, a private realm of values where pluralism reigns and a public world of what our culture calls facts."⁷²

Some individuals, for example, will go to church on Sunday, sing in the choir and give all kinds of praises to the Lord Jesus Christ. Some may speak in tongues or they may give a powerful testimony. The very next day they either go to school or work and they will subscribe to the notion of evolution. Thus, publicly they expressed belief in the Bible and its teaching about creation, while at school or on the job they will tend to agree with the culture that is popular. If this case, it would be subscribing to the belief of evolution. In a situation of this nature it is evident that the culture makes an impact on the Christian. This is not as it should be. The Christian should make a definite impact on the culture so that the culture subscribes to the fundamental teachings of the Bible-the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Within the last couple of decades, and especially in America, there has been significant dwindling of membership and attendance. These two problems are symptomatic of a massive cultural shift; it has led to discontentment and poor church

⁷² Newbigin, "Can the West be Converted," 359.

attendance. At the inception of the Christian faith, history confirms that the church has endured thousands of years of internal and external upheaval and controversy. The Christian church has endured atheism, agnosticism, betrayal, false accusation, cannibalism, and a host of other controversial issues. The Protestant Reformation, the Crusades, and multiple “Great Awakenings” show evidence that the church has been in conflict over the years.

Now we are in the 21st century - the third millennium. The church has outlasted kings, kingdoms, governments, nation, and philosophy. When the church presented to the world its beliefs, it made a profound and positive impact on the world. That is, when the church was in its purest infancy, it made our world a better place to live. Thus, it has been a positive force for good in the world. Conversely, the church participated in the killing of many people. Thus, the church throughout history has been described as a good institution and on the other hand a bad institution. Despite how the church has been described, one thing is for certain, it has always been relevant. No one can say that the church has been an irrelevant force in the world.

Despite the rich history of the Christian church, the Christian faith appears to be irrelevant to many; especially in the Western world. The Christian church is experiencing a decline in membership and church attendance. This decline is seen mostly in churches in America. An astonishing number (produced by some researchers) is that 94% of churchgoing high school students will abandon attendance at church after they graduate from high school.⁷³ In addition, research from the Barna Group suggests that individuals who are outside Christianity have a negative or neutral position regarding the Christian

⁷³ Josh McDowell, *The Last Christian Generation* (Holiday, FL: GreenKey Books, 2006), 13.

faith and the Christian church.⁷⁴ There appears to be a mass exodus from the Christian church and the numbers are increasing. There are many negative opinions about the church from outsiders and the future does not look good. For example, the Barna Group found that those who claim to have a personal relationship and intimate relationship with Jesus failed to demonstrate that they truly have a relationship with Him at all. That is, the lives that they live on a daily basis does not exemplify Christian principles.⁷⁵ Josh McDowell has been identified as an alarmist because of things he wrote in his book, “*The Last Christian Generation*.” Even though some called him an alarmist, research by the Barna Group support the positions that he has espoused. Various denominations corroborate the above information by a preponderance of the evidence collected. For example, the Southern Baptist Convention has corroborated this information regarding their own denomination; they state that there is a drop in baptisms and membership. As a result, church attendance is down as well.⁷⁶

The problem of church attendance has been complicated because church members and church leaders have expressed disillusionment and discontentment with traditional values and practices done by the Christian Church. One only needs to look at the vast number of books, articles, and testimonies from pastors and church leaders who have expressed the notion that they are “tired” of the church as it is. Some have even indicated that they have left the body of Christ⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Dave Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *Unchristian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 25.

⁷⁵ George Barna, *Think Like Jesus* (Minneapolis, MN: Baker Books, 2003), 26, quoted in McDowell, *Last Christian Generation*, 18.

⁷⁶ Bob Allen, “SBC Notes a Drop In Baptisms, Attendance,” *Christian Century* 128, no. 14 (July 12, 2011): 16. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed January 18, 2014).

⁷⁷ Dwight J. Friesen, *Thy Kingdom Connected* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 8.

The above seems to make the church be an irrelevant institution in this 21st century. It seems to be destined to be an institution that is obscure and does not meet the needs of people. The exodus of young adults, the exodus of other groups in the church, a rapid decline in membership, and church attendance at an all-time low appear to be indicators that the church has lost its cultural influence. That is, the Christian church seems to have positioned itself as an institution that is dying. Therefore, it is prudent to determine why the church appears to be dying. Perhaps there are many reasons why the Christian Church, especially in America, is dying at such a rapid pace. It is evident that individuals have lost faith in the church as a viable institution. Liberal theology has significantly impacted many mainline denominations. Cultural shifts to postmodern, philosophical and religious views have made significant impacts on worship, church attendance, and commitment to the body of Christ. In addition, the notion that there is no absolute truth has significantly impacted the Christian church in a negative manner. In response to the above problem, church leaders, scholars, and other individuals have determined that new strategies need to be implemented that demonstrate that the Christian Church is relevant to our modern world and that his message is true.

Problems with Church Ministry

While the enormous decline in church attendance and membership appears to be the main problem that is not, in reality, true. It is merely a symptom of the problem that the church faces as an institution. The truth is the church may not necessarily be doing anything that is wrong to cause a loss of membership or a drop in church attendance. Perhaps the church has failed to engage the culture with the message of the gospel. However, it is not necessarily because there is a lack of effort on the part of the church

organization. For example, many churches have preached the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet there continues to be a drop in membership and church attendance.⁷⁸

Loss of Faith in the Church

Many churches and denominations continue to face the problem of declining membership and attendance at worship services. However, most of the polls and surveys indicated that individuals are ready to engage in some type of religious experiences. That is, the older church members who do not attend church regularly are actively engaged with some other religious activity or worship experience outside the physical church building.⁷⁹ Thus, even though church attendance is on the decline, there continues to be an interest in religion. Therefore, it appears that individuals have reservations about the organized church in its present state. Individuals are dissatisfied with the local church for a variety of reasons; these reasons are consistent along most denominational lines.⁸⁰

Researchers have indicated that there is a growing dissatisfaction with almost every facet of American Christianity. For example, some say that they reject the religious culture of their parents. They say that they are discontented with mega-churches, door-to-door evangelism, altar calls, etc.⁸¹ This reminds me of the hippies during the 1960s and 1970s. They were adamant against traditional institutions. During the Nixon Presidential years, they lost faith and trust in American politics. Next, they lost faith and trust in the religion of their parents. Hippies began to wear blue jeans with holes in them

⁷⁸ Friesen, *Thy Kingdom Connected*, 21.

⁷⁹ Amy Johnson Frykholm, “Loose Connections: What’s Happening to Church Membership?” *Christian Century* 128, no. 11: 20-23, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed September 28, 2013).

⁸⁰ D. A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emergent Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 19.

⁸¹ Brian D. McLaren, *A New Kind of Christianity* (New York: HarperOne, 2010), 9.

to indicate that they rejected materialism sought after by their parents. This youth movement started a significant decline in church attendance. In addition, this youth group researched and studied how the Christian Church participated in crusades, holy wars, attempted to legislate morality, etc. At the same time, the church demonstrated how immoral it was as an institution. As a result, they saw the church as a hypocritical institution that was only interested in its advancement.⁸² Even though these were perceptions, they were nevertheless real to those who reached the above conclusion. Therefore, we must find a way to address the concerns of youth and adults if church attendance is to improve.

Young people between the ages of 18 and 30 say that they have a desire for a religious experience, but they do not attend church. They say that they have found themselves in search of a more satisfying religious experience than that of attending a worship service. Many of them claim that they have studied traditional Christianity and have tried to draw from models espoused by the Christian Church of the first century A.D. For example, they say that they like meeting in homes, small meetings, and fellowship with each other in non-contemporary ways. Others have rejected traditional values established by the Christian Church. As a result of this, some have said that they are more fulfilled when they seek to address poverty, injustice, and the marginalized. This idea promotes what some theologians called the social gospel. I contend that the social gospel is only an element of what being a Christian is about. That is, we cannot ignore the fact that the gospel has social aspects to it and that it cannot be ignored because Christ Himself did not ignore it. For example, Christ healed the sick and fed the

⁸² Kinnaman and Lyons, *Unchristian*, 36.

hungry. Jesus sought those who were considered to be outcast from the culture of His day. Jesus came to heal the sick, the blind, those with palsy, etc. Ultimately, He came to heal the sin sick soul. Therefore, Christian Churches cannot ignore the social aspect of the gospel, but at the same time it cannot ignore the importance of preparing people for eternal life.

It is important for the Christian Church not to allow a watered down version of the gospel to exist within its church walls. Today, individuals become members of churches without knowing what repentance is; they do not know what it is to be born again. In some churches today there is little or no requirement for sacrifice or for devotion to Jesus Christ. Christianity has become too easy for his professed followers. For example, believers are not admonished to take up their cross and follow Christ (Luke 9:23). The prosperity gospel tends to teach against this. The prosperity gospel teaches that one, if a Christian, will prosper in this life financially and in other ways. They promote the idea that God does not want individuals to suffer while living in this world. This idea is contrary to the tenets of the early Christian Church. It is a “slap in the face” to those who have given their lives for the cause of Christianity. When the church was in its state of infancy, members made great sacrifices for the cause of Christ. As time went on, there was little sacrifice made for Jesus. Leaders of the Christian faith became members of political offices, and Christian followers desired ease and convenience. This was in great contrast to members of the early Christian Church while it was in its infant stage.⁸³

⁸³ Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Present Day* (New York: Harper Collins. 2008), 106.

The greatest challenges of the church are from the inside more than the outside. From the inside, the church must address issues surrounding the apathy of church members; this is a result of an easy type of life and culture in our world today. Church attendance has significantly dwindled because people have lost faith in the traditional church organization structures and beliefs. Popular church leaders and officers have voiced their discontent regarding church organization and structures.

The church faces challenges outside the realm of Christianity as well. The church is portrayed in the entertainment field as having people whose lives are no different than those who are not members of the church. Sometimes, in fact, those outside the church are portrayed as being better people than those who attend church every week.

It is quite evident that the Christian church in the 21st century's challenge is to meet the needs of its congregants. Fewer people are becoming members of the church, while at the same time those who are members failed to attend a worship service on a regular basis. Obviously, this impacts the ability of the church to reach out to those who do not know of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a loss in resources—people and financial. Our greatest challenge is to find ways to meet people where they are while at the same time being true to the gospel message. As a leader of our congregation, I must ask myself what I can do to reach youth in the church and outside the church. What can I do to stabilize members whose names are on the list but failed to attend church? What do I need to do in order to be the congregation to find balance between their Christian faith and the culture that impacts all of our lives? In moments of honesty, I must confess that the culture has impacted the Christian faith more than the Christian faith has impacted culture. The church has allowed our modern-day culture to influence and impact what

it—the church—should look like. But Jesus came to the earth he told the culture what it should look like in relation to God. This is the challenge of the modern-day church. If attendance is to improve, again, we must find a balance between non-negotiable principles espoused in the Bible and that of our culture.

Research Question Three: (Ecclesiological) Can I develop a new community of believers who worship God in non-traditional ways?

Our church's position regarding mission is a function of the practical theology department of our denomination. A question that must be addressed is whether there is a mission within the confines of the local church. How does the church benefit from a "worship on demand" ministry?

- A. Does the First Testament provide a model of theory for non-traditional worship?
- B. Did Jesus model or teach non-traditional ways to worship God?
- C. Does the Second Testament provide a model or theory for non-traditional worship?

Jesus and the synagogue

The synoptic Gospels all draw attention to the fact that Jesus was involved in the synagogue of Galilee. While in the synagogue Jesus had opportunities to teach, heal, and to enter into various discussions with the scribes and others who were identified as leaders of the people (Matthew 4:23; Mark 1:39; Luke 4:44; Matthew 12:9-14; 13:54-58).⁸⁴ The word "synagogue" was a Greek term use to identify various kinds of gathering. However, it became a technical term to mean an assembly or congregation of the Jewish people. Similar to the word church and Christian circles, in time the word

⁸⁴ R. Banks, *Jesus and the Law in the Synoptic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 91.

synagogue came to mean a building where the Jewish people gather; later it became regarded as a symbol for the religion espoused by Judaism.⁸⁵

According to Jewish tradition, the origin of the synagogue took place during the time of Moses. However, many contemporary scholars believe that it was started from the Babylonian exile which was in the sixth century BC. Some suggest that the exiles met spontaneously in order to sustain their faith in the absence of the temple. It is further suggested that at these meetings people were consolidated into an institutional form after they return to Palestine.⁸⁶

The synagogue differed from the temple. The synagogues were led by laypersons. It had a caretaker, a president, and it had a group of elders that were in charge of various affairs of the synagogue. No sacrifices were carried out during the synagogue services. The main purpose of the synagogue was for instruction in the law of God. This meant that the oral law was presented, the Scriptures were studied, the Talmud and Midrash were used, and people were able to learn about God and his purposes. There was an all-out effort to educate the entire Jewish community regarding its faith, applying the words of God in every aspect of Jewish life, and exploring the implications of a covenant obedient to God. This approach was not done merely when the people gathered for Sabbath services, but it was done through using the synagogue more generally for the elementary education of students and for more advanced studies.

The synagogue services included the recital of the Shema (based on Deuteronomy 6: 4-9), prayer was offered, the reading of the law was done (the Pentateuch), readings

⁸⁵ Erich Beyreuther, Erich, Hans Bietenhard, Colin Brown, and Lothar Coenen, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 1 (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster Press, 1975), 291-298.

⁸⁶ H. H. Rowley, *Worship in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 213-229.

from the profits were given, and at the end blessings were pronounced. Typically, the law of God was read in Hebrew and explained in Aramaic. The readings were arranged over the course of time into Sabbath portions for a three- year cycle. However, if a priest was present, the priestly blessing (Numbers 6:24-26) would be given in order to conclude the proceedings.⁸⁷

The synagogue represents a new type of worship experience relative to the worship of God. This worship place was a house for the meeting of the people of God, rather than a house for God himself.⁸⁸ The temple and the synagogue coexisted; the synagogue became an institution that supplemented the temple. The prayers and readings given at the synagogue were all linked to the great festivals that took place at the temple. Thus, the synagogue was used to provide access to the various services at the temple when there were large crowds of Jews who could travel from distant places to Jerusalem. Over the course of time, it was known to be associated by the rabbis with the meeting of the Israelites for prayer and gatherings in the synagogue.⁸⁹ After the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D., synagogues became even more popular and were known as substitutes for the temple. Synagogue became centers for the community life and the religious life of Jews who were scattered throughout the world.

Luke 4:18-21 declares that Jesus had come to establish a new center of worship that the Israelites were to be a part of. This new center of worship was to be found in him and the salvation he proclaimed, rather than in the temple, the synagogue, the law, or the

⁸⁷ G. F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries*, vol.1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 289-307.

⁸⁸ H. W. Turner, *From Temple to Meeting House: The Phenomenology and Theology of Places of Worship* (The Hague: Mouton, 1979), 101.

⁸⁹ R. A. Stewart, "The Synagogue," *Evangelical Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (January 1971):40-41, 44-45.

customs and traditions inherited from previous generations. Thus, Jesus established the fact that temple and synagogue worship was unacceptable to him. For in both they merely pointed to the Old Testament laws and rituals. Jesus was well aware that at his death those things would be done away with. The earthly temple was to be replaced by the spiritual temple in one's body wherein the Holy Spirit was to dwell. The synagogue was to be replaced by what we call the church.

Jesus participated in both the temple and synagogue format of worship. He was dedicated at the temple and was inducted there at the age of 12 years old. His ministry throughout Judea was often done in the temple precincts. Generally, he attended the various festivals of the Jewish people. However, we find him going to worship in the synagogue on the Sabbath day, "as his custom was" (Luke 4:16).

Members of the early Christian church continue to worship with and among the Jews and were normally regarded as a sect of Judaism-the Nazarene sect (Acts 24:5). After the resurrection of Jesus and when he ascended to heaven they continued to worship at the temple (Acts 2:46).

Even though Jesus was seen as the fulfillment of the sacrificial temples system, Christians continue its basic pattern of Hebrew worship. It was the synagogue model that emerged to the upper room experience. The synagogue service was held weekly on the Sabbath. The Lord 's Supper was added to this special occasion.

Early Christian worship consisted of six main components: Scripture, preaching, prayer, singing, the Lord's Supper, and the bringing in of gifts (Acts 2:42, 46, 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-3). The preaching focused on salvation, and especially those things drawn from the Old Testament prophecies. Prayers appear to be freely offered rather than

in a formalized manner. The early post-Apostolic Didache suggests that formal repetition of the Lord's Prayer and doxology were done (Didache 10.6, 8).

The most complete early post-Apostolic description of a Christian worship service comes from the writing of Justin, a Christian apologist. He reports of the worship experience in Rome at around A.D. 150. He reports the following:

On the day called after the sun a meeting of all who live in cities or in the country takes place at a common spot and the Memoirs of the Apostles or the writing of the Prophets are read as long as time allows. When the reader is finished the leader delivers an address through which he exhorts and requires them to follow noble teachings and examples. Then we all rise in send heavenwards prayers. And, as said before, as soon as we are finished praying, praying and wine mixed with water on laid down and the leader too praise and is thanks, as powerfully as he can, and the people joining in, in saying the "Amen"; and now comes the distribution to each and the common meal on the gifts that have been brought and to those who are not present it is sent by the hands of the deacons (Justin, 1 Apology, chap 67).

Jesus said, "God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). By making this declaration Jesus disconnected worship from a place or a race and opened up its rational-emotive elements. Thus, our practice of worship must be founded on a theology of worship. Culture plays a part in various forms of liturgy. However, we must ever keep in mind that Jesus is Lord over and transformer of culture. One has only to read the Scriptures to find that worship experience, styles and cultures varied throughout the Bible. The worship by the prophets and patriarchs differed from the worship of the Israelites while they were in the wilderness. Worship at Solomon's temple differed in sacrifice, form, and content in the Jewish nation when they were in Babylon or when they were in Persian captivity. While the children of Israel were in Egypt there was little worship of God. Thus, God calls Moses to tell Pharaoh to let His people go.

Our denomination has traditionally worshiped with the notion that the sermon is the center of the great event of worship. Other components of worship have been considered as preliminaries. Sometimes the preliminaries are not seen as important as the sermon itself. It is quite possible that visitors can get more out of the preliminaries than they can from the sermon. For example, a number rendered by the choir may speak to the heart of a person more eloquently than the message presented by the preacher doing that worship experience. However, a congregation must not have so many preliminaries that it takes away from the preached word.

A larger congregation's needs and perceptions are quite different from those of a smaller church. We now live at a time in which an intellectually astute and advanced person needs certain stimulation that one cannot get from a smaller church environment. At the same time, our culture has developed defense mechanisms for screening out information. The vast number of commercial and other media intrusion has caused many people to develop a "take it or leave it" attitude. If one is not careful, this attitude might tempt the person who goes to church. In order to address this challenge, there needs to be a new reformation. This reformation in worship should allow people to experience the presence of our transcendent God while they are in the worship service. There needs to be a worship service that will open people's hearts to the preaching of the word of God in a new and vibrant manner. As a church, we need to seek this new reformation in worship.

We are now living in a world that has become more and more secularized in which information about God makes little impact on the lives of individuals. We need a mechanism that will lead men, women, boys, and girls into an experience with God through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit.

This worship experience should acknowledge the transcendence as well as the immanence of God. When this is done, there will be a balance between fervor and fanaticism. That is, people need to not only know about God, but they need to experience His presence in their lives, at church, and even while they are away from church. If worship leaders are skillful and prayerful in their preparation, they can open the door for those who come to worship God to have a deep and abiding experience with Him.

It is our privilege to be a part of worship. One can read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation and discover that worship is one of the main themes in the Bible. My study of worship has caused me to acknowledge that there are seven principles aligned with the worship experience. Those seven principles are as follows:

1. Christian worship is to be God centered.
2. Christian worship is redemptive faith that must be experienced.
3. Christian worship is profoundly Christological.
4. Christian worship confirms fellowship with the Spirit of God and with fellow worshipers.
5. Christian worship transcends symbols in order to convey meaning and purpose.
6. The proclamation of the word of God is central to Christian worship.
7. Christian worship must be eschatological in nature.

The above principles are able to provide a guidepost. When the above principles are appropriately applied they will help guide the worship leader and pastor to develop a worship that will lead people to have a higher and richer experience in Jesus Christ. Worship then, becomes more than a conscience-saving experience. That is, some people attend the worship service out of habit or to satisfy their conscience. It is our goal to have the worship experience be so meaningful that each Sunday when individuals attend church, they will see the worship experience as entering into a higher spiritual level with

the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. When individuals reach this experience, then and only then, can it be said that the pastor, along with church leaders, have fulfilled their requirements to lead the people of God.

Reflection

After I completed reviewing the literature, the Site Team and I decided to meet in order to determine what my findings were. We discovered that traditional worship shares some of the same type of music with liturgical churches. That is liturgical churches use a lot of hymns in their worship experience. One of the main differences between the two is that traditional worship services normally do not have a fixed type of liturgy. A similarity between the two types of worship is that traditional worship service has a leader that leads in the singing of the hymns and it has a robed choir; the choir is often accompanied by an organist or pianist. Generally, the service starts with some type of music and the pastor will offer an initial greeting or there may be some type of announcements made. The service moves along with more singing and eventually an offering is received and the pastor or some other leader will read the day's Scripture before launching into the sermon. At the conclusion of the sermon, the pastor will make an appeal for discipleship and will subsequently offer a benediction. It many churches however, the church will sing a final song before the benediction is given.

The heart of the traditional church service is the sermon; the heart of the liturgical service is the Eucharist. That is, in the traditional worship service the preached Word and the Bible are central to the worship experience. Generally speaking, traditional churches believe that Bible reading and the preached Word about faith and the Bible serves the congregation best in its attempt to help a Christian person grow in the Lord Jesus. The traditional church participates in the sacrament of communion. However, it is not

administered it as often as it is in the liturgical church. In traditional churches the communion is viewed as a symbol that represents the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the liturgical churches, the bread and wine are seen as the true body and blood of Jesus. Thus, the traditional church promotes the idea that the blood of Jesus and the broken body of Jesus are merely symbols of His life; they simply remind participants of Jesus's death on the cross.

Our Site Team discovered that there are a number of reasons why a church might hold on to its traditional worship style. For example, a large number of the members of a given congregation might be elderly. If an abrupt change in worship was moved from a traditional style to a more contemporary one, it could significantly impact the worship experience of the elderly-in a negative way. In addition, the youth tend to like contemporary music, whereas older individuals tend to like the traditional hymn. A problem exists in some churches because the church members are divided whether or not it should change to contemporary music in order to reach the youth. As a result of this, it may lead to “nothing happening” in the church. The church splits, a hybrid may be created, members may choose to switch to another church, or it could cause a lot of confusion. We discovered that we need to tread softly as we make a determination regarding the best type of worship and the best type of music we should use in worship.

We discovered that some churches maintain traditional worship because they believe that it is more faithful and beneficial to an organized church. Some churches feel that the term “contemporary” contradicts what church should be about. It is felt that contemporary music, for example, has too much substance from the entertainment industry and thereby does not glorify God. It is the type of music in which youth and

some others identify with outside the confines of the church premises. Some feel that contemporary music is merely an extension of the culture that has negatively impacted Christianity.

Some still believe that traditional church worship should remain. They point to the notion that hymns provide a story and message to believers as well as nonbelievers. That is, it is believed that hymns consist of the theology of the Christian faith. Therefore, some believe that traditional worship should remain in place. Thus, because music drives so much of the worship experience, it is important that members and church leaders come to a consensus regarding music in the church. It is theorized that when songs are watered down they are not nearly as effective in helping congregation members mature in their relationship with Jesus Christ. Proponents of traditional worship services also asked whether the church should bow down to the pressures of the culture just to satisfy individuals. It asked the question as to whether individuals need a change of heart, rather than a change in the worship service.

At the conclusion of our reflection regarding traditional and contemporary worship, we decided to list the strengths and weaknesses of traditional worship. A decided advantage of the traditional worship service is its rich theological heritage found within hymns. That is, if a congregation is precise and intentional regarding the selection of hymns, it can promote a theological point of view at that worship service as well as throughout the year. Also, it is postulated that if one participates in traditional worship services and uses hymns, it can cover a vast number of topics throughout the year, whereas fewer topics are normally covered when contemporary music is used.

Another advantage of engaging in traditional worship is that of having the choir lead the singing. This generally allows for the involvement of more people in leading worship. It is said that it is less strenuous on individuals. That is, when singing with the choir it is much less strenuous than when one has to sing into a microphone with just a few other singers on the stage or on the floor leading the worship service. It also limits the number of individuals who are engaged in the worship experience. Within the traditional choir, there is collaboration and communal experience that takes place inside the group. When one participates in the traditional worship service, one does not feel that he/she is being entertained by someone providing a concert. People know that they are to sing along with the choir rather than that someone entertaining them.

Traditional worship helps congregants stay connected with their past. This is especially helpful for the elderly. They are able to reflect upon their inheritance, their experiences with the Lord Jesus Christ, and they can reflect upon how God has blessed them over the years. Some of the elderly have special songs that means so much to them. It could be a song that helped them through a crisis. It may be a hymn that their parents or other loved one cherished.

Traditional worship also has its setbacks. Traditional worship can make one feel as though it is outdated, services are stagnant, and that worship leaders are out of touch with those they purport to serve. Traditional worship services are stereotypical church services that are often portrayed in movies and sitcoms that show that members are not interested, the worship services are irrelevant, and members often fall asleep. The fact is that there may be some truth to this stereotypical portrayal of the traditional worship service. In addition, other worship services may lack visual stimuli. For example,

contemporary services may project images onto the screen that shows song or the music lyrics. Even though this may be done in traditional services, it does not normally have the flare that contemporary services have. In the traditional worship service, hymns may fail to connect with worshipers; especially for people who have limited theological knowledge or background. For example, some of the language in the hymns may be obsolete and may thereby skew the meaning of the hymn. At the very least, it makes it more difficult to understand. Thus, at a time when people like having things presented as simply as possible, presenting them with challenges can make it difficult for church members to want to attend service and it can make it difficult for visitors to want to be a part of that congregation.

It is interesting that 43% of churches that say that their pastor subscribes to liberal theology have big screen devices in their church. About 70% of conservative churches have big screen devices in their churches. However, many of the churches use the big-screen devices for movies or other video segments. About 60% of churches show movie clips or other video segments of various services and events. Small churches tend not to show movie clips or video segments as often as larger churches do. The same is true for liberal churches. That is, they tend not to show video clips and video segments as often as the larger and conservative churches.

Sending email blasts is most common with Protestant churches. Roughly 56% of those churches send out email blasts. About 47% of the small churches send email blasts; 66% of churches who have 100 or more adults in attendance send email blasts.

Churches continue to take advantage of Internet services. A decade ago, 34% of Protestant churches used a website. A few years ago, 57% of Protestant churches used the

Internet service. Today, 60% of churches have Internet services. Churches with less than 100 adults attending church service use the Internet service about 48% of the time. Churches with 100 to 250 adults in attendance show that over 75% of the churches in this category have websites. Churches with over 250 adults in attendance showed that 91% of those churches have websites.

About 60% of Protestant churches engage in using emails on a large-scale basis. This is done mainly by larger churches however, smaller churches use the email blasts at a 47% rate. Churches that have over 100 adults in attendance use the email system at a rate of 66%. That is these churches use email blasts at least once per week.

The Internet has paved the way for churches to use social networks such as MySpace. Interestingly, Charismatic churches are more prone to use social network than Protestant and evangelical churches.

The use of satellite dishes continues to grow slightly. In 2000, about 7% of Protestant churches possessed a satellite dish in order to receive programming and training. That percentage number has grown only slightly over the years. This may be due to the cost involved.

The use of technology in churches has been important in the ministry of the church in the 21st century. George Barna advises that churches should engage and an “intelligent and foresighted Internet strategy” so that they can participate in an effective and meaningful ministries.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ George Barna, “Technology Use Is Growing Rapidly in Churches,” <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/5-barna-update/172-technology-use-is-growing-rapidly-in-churches#.Utr8thAo7IU> (accessed October 11, 2013).

George Barna said that he was quite aware that smaller churches were less technologically-friendly when compared to larger churches. One reason the smaller churches did not use technology was because they claimed that the more technologically advanced church packages cannot fit into their budgets. Also, they did not think they were valuable tools needed in order to have an effective and meaningful ministry.

Barna and his research group addressed the slowed rate of growth of technology tools in the church market. Barna says: “The fact that market penetration of digital technologies seems to top out around two-thirds of the market could easily change if the digital-resistant churches conceived ways of facilitating their vision through the deployment of such tools. That is what made these tools so appealing to larger churches: being able to apply the tools to furthering their ministry goals.”⁹¹

The millennial population is an age group that covers roughly 18 to 29 years old. They have aptly been described as digital natives. That is, they are adept at effectively using technology. This population tends to stand apart from previous generations relative to their ability regarding technology. A question posed by the Barna group was, what happens when the “tech savvy” millennial population and their faith meet? Does it mean that a collision is inevitable?

Throughout the centuries, the Christian church has had things in place to help individuals through the worship experience. For example, the church has established habitual practices such as prayer, scripture reading, communion, the singing of hymns, choirs, etc. as a means to assist individuals in Christian worship.

⁹¹ Ibid.

Today, there is a new dimension that has taken hold of the millennial population. This individual group use technology as soon as they awake in order to stay in touch with the outside world. Thus, this impacts the personal and public habits of the millennial population. For example, when this group gets up in the morning, they make communication with the use of their cell phones as soon as they arise.

The availability of the Internet and social media has influenced the millennial population in many ways. When they want to know an answer to a question or concern, all they have to do is Google it, use their Twitter account, Instagram account, or they may scroll down their Facebook account. It is evident that these devices have impacted the personal spirituality of this population.⁹²

Youth from ages 18 to 29 is definitely impacted by the digital world in which we live. For example, instead of using the traditional Bible, this population uses digital versions of Scripture. When viewing Scripture, using digital technology, they are able to look at a Scripture in various versions. Research shows that 70% of the millennial population uses a digital form when looking at Scripture. About a third of the group say they read Scripture on a cell phone or online. Thus, this shows how widespread the use of technology has become. Digital technology trends have greatly affected millennial users. Also, the millennial users are heavy users of online video - relative to their faith practice. That is, nearly 55% of the millennial populations who practice the Christian faith use online video.

⁹² George Barna, "How Technology is Changing Millennial Faith," <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/millennials/640-how-technology-is-changing-millennial-faith#.Utr9kBAo7IU> (accessed January 18, 2014).

About 30% of Christians and non-Christian millennial individuals together engage in the practice of online video. They also use various types of technologies to search out a church. That is, they use technology to find out as much information about a church before they attend it. They even find out information about their own church; if they find negative information, this tends to influence them not to attend.⁹³

The use of technology has other implications regarding the worship experience. When a preacher makes a statement, individuals in the congregation who are technologically savvy are able to immediately validate whether a statement made is true or false. No longer can a pastor/preacher make a statement and expect the congregation to accept it simply because he/she is the pastor or preacher for the day. This thought fosters the idea that a pastor/preacher must be well-prepared when he/she steps into the pulpit to preach the Word of God. I surmise that if the preacher for the day gives incorrect information, a tech savvy person will be turned-off for the remainder of the worship service. In fact, that worshiper may not return to the worship service at all, and may even spread his/her finding regarding the incorrect information given by the preacher for the day. This type of experience can have a groundswell result. For example, if an individual tells his/her parent about his/her findings about the preacher giving incorrect information, it may cause the millennial person to influence his/her parent to attend another church with him/her in order to receive correct information regarding the Bible. Also, that same person may influence other young people to go to another church where accurate information is being proclaimed. Thus, a preacher must be well-prepared when preaching the word of God.

⁹³ Barna, "How Technology is Changing Millennial Faith."

The millennial population has the ability to fact-check information church leaders give; they can do so instantly. In fact, a striking 38% of practicing Christian millennial persons says that they do this all the time. The millennial population does not experience their faith through the traditional one-way communication - from the pulpit to the pew. The millennial person wants to enter an active type of faith experience. Churches need to be ready for the millennial way of thinking. Many of the millennial persons take their technology devices to church and use them during the worship service. Even though it is preferred that the preacher or worship leader has their undivided attention, reality suggests that they use these devices throughout the worship service. Once again, I must emphasize the importance of the “preacher of the day” having accurate information to share with the parishioners.

While at church, millennial users say that they engage in fact-checking the sermons. They are in touch with others and report to them what their findings are. They are able to fact-find, relay the information to others, blog the information, and post comments on blogs about spiritual matters they have just heard. They say that they have the ability to forage multiple digital places at any given time. That is, they can text from Twitter to Instagram or from Facebook to other social media. Therefore, the church must forge ahead in addressing the needs of this significant population. If it is not done, we will lose an entire generation of church leaders. We must somehow address the needs of the millennial population so that they might learn valuable lessons in the faith experience and be able to share those experiences with later generations.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Barna, “How Technology is Changing Millennial Faith.”

Those of the millennial population live in an era in which transparency is extremely important to them. Social media and digital tools have propelled this attitude forward. Any leader of any organization, and especially leaders of religious institutions, must understand that the millennial population desire and demand transparency. Therefore, it is very important that leaders of any organization not make false promises or exaggerations in their messages. Millennial people already exhibit a degree of distrust in institutions. Thus, they have a heightened sensitivity for artificiality and false promotion of an idea or product.

As we seek to boost attendance at our church, it is important for us to understand that the millennial population desires relevant and two-way conversations on a wide range of topics. It is important for us to understand this because these types of conversations are already happening online as millennial persons use digital technology. Thus, digital technology has made this kind of transparency and engaging interest action a nonnegotiable item of the millennial population.

The Barna Group is in sync with the above notion. The Barna Group researchers say, ‘For church leaders, that data point to lots of opportunities to engage Millennials spiritually online. This stems from the convergence of two trends: Millennials leaving the Church, and Millennials taking their faith discussions and explorations online. One of the most positive trends among Millennials is that they want faith that is holistically integrated into all areas of life -including their technology. How the church acknowledges and engages the digital domain-and teaches faithfulness in real-life to young adults as well, will determine much about its long-term effectiveness among Millennials.’⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Barna, ‘How Technology is Changing Millennial Faith.’

For years, the Christian church in America has been concerned about the millennial population. Parents and church leaders have mulled over the fact that the faith development of this generation, born between 1984 and 2002, have been leaving the church. The Barna Group found out that nearly 60% of young people who grew up in Christian churches from the millennial population walked away from their church or their faith at some point during their adult life. A second finding of the Barna Group was that the unchurched segment of the millennial population has increased over the last 10 years. This mirrors the larger cultural trend in America. That is, more and more people are less likely to be members of the Christian faith.

A third thing the Barna Group found was that when the millennial individuals were asked what helped their faith to grow, the “church” does not even make their top 10 factors. Instead, most of them said that it was prayer, family and friends, having children, the Bible, and the development of a relationship with Jesus on their own.

Those individuals who were surveyed stated how they did not have relationships with those who were members of the church. This says that this population needs to establish meaningful relationships with those who want to worship with them, and those they presently worship with. This notion has helped us to understand and see that if our church is going to continue to grow and develop, we must do more to establish our millennial population within the confines of the church so that they can develop meaningful relationships. Even though this population uses digital technology and refined it to meet what they think are their immediate needs, it does not have the ability to establish meaningful relationships. We believe that relationships are developed and

maintained through personal contact. That is, we must create more opportunities to speak and support each other face-to-face.

This research has helped me understand the dynamics of establishing a personal relationship with Jesus and with fellow worshipers. I further discovered that the millennial persons who decided not to attend church did not have close relationships or friendships with an adult; 90% of them never had a mentor at the church. George Barna and his research team say the following:

“The implication is that huge proportions of churchgoing teenagers do not feel relationally accepted in church. This kind of information should be a wake-up call to ministry leaders as well as to unchurched adults of the necessity of becoming friends with the next generation of believers.”⁹⁶

Reflection

This last section regarding technology has put a lot of emphasis on the millennial population—young adults from age 18 to 29. An emphasis was placed on this population because research, as well as our church, shows that this age group does not attend church on a regular basis. I often wondered why. After all, they are from apparently very fine homes. Many of them attended church as children almost weekly with their parents. It is an age group that is technologically savvy and uses many technology devices to communicate. Even while in church they say that they communicate with those who are outside of the walls of the church.

The millennial individuals are an age group that we cannot afford to lose. They are intelligent and energetic young people who need to develop relationships and be

⁹⁶ Barna, “Technology Use Is Growing Rapidly in Churches.”

guided by those who are more experienced; they need godly support. However, they are also a group of individuals who want to be transparent. As such, they want others to be transparent. Their jobs and friends encourage this attribute.

A significant challenge I face is being able to communicate with the millennial person through effective discussion and dialogue. Worship, in the traditional manner, inhibits this type of communication. For example, while preaching a sermon, the preacher is unable to stop and have conversations with those in the congregation; or, if a member wants to challenge what is being said, opportunities through the traditional worship service does not lend itself for that to be done. Yet, this is what is preferred by the millennial population. I am aware that establishing the “worship on demand” does not address all of the needs of those in the congregation and those of the millennial population. However, it is a start. We will be able to build upon the knowledge we have and minister to the needs of the various populations in a more effective manner. The literature review has led me to do this.

I have become more sensitive to our church’s need at our local congregation to be proactive in helping our young people establish relationships with those who have demonstrated an authentic relationship with Christ. I need to establish forums so that we can listen to the concerns of our youth as to why they do not attend church on a regular basis. This approach must be an ongoing one.

Our financial records indicate that those in the millennial age group tend not to be financial supporters of the church. As a church, we attributed this to the notion that they were starting out relatively young in life and were trying to get themselves established. However, we discovered that the millennial population makes contributions to other

nonprofit organizations; they do this through digital technology. Thus, we must conclude that it is not because of a lack of finances that this age group does not support the church financially. Obviously, there are other reasons. One reason has to be that the millennial person views the organization that he/she makes contributions are authentic ones.

I am concerned that research shows that the millennial young people do not see the church as being important in their lives. Frankly, I was very shocked to find out that millennial youth do not see the church as being one of the “top 10” important focus points in their lives. Somehow, we as adults and as a faith community have failed these young people somewhere along the way. It is help me to understand why church attendance for this group is so low.

I am committed to creating an effective “worship on demand” type of program (DVD) that is appealing to the millennial population as well as other members in the church. I anticipate that this will encourage attendance. While attendance is increased in our church, I also believe that it will help to stabilize the faith of our young people. In addition, I am committed to help our young people find a sense of mission while attending church. That is, I believe that an effective ministry to the millennial group means that I must help these young people discover their own mission in the world. That is they should not be asked to be members of the church and wait their turn to become active in the various activities of the church.

In order to address this pertinent issue regarding the millennial youth group, it is incumbent upon me as the church leader to involve them heavily in the “worship on demand” ministry at our church. I believe that they can make significant contributions in guiding us as to how we can reach the youth of the church. They will be able to help us

boost our attendance of this population simply by helping us to understand the thinking of our youth.

The literature review has startled to me at times, yet it has been profoundly helpful. At the start of this project my focus was mainly on the seniors and other members of the church. Now I know that I must have a more comprehensive focus that includes all members of the church-especially our youth. The composition of our technology team will significantly change as a result of this literature review.

Synthesizing Review of Literature

In consultation with the Site Team, we decided to synthesize all the information we had learned through the review of the literature, various discussions, data retrieved from the focus group, conversations with visitors, conversations with church members, and discussions among ourselves. We had a lengthy discussion about variety in the worship service. Many of our members, as well as visitors, are said that worship services were too predictable and that when they would go to other churches, they had a sense of excitement because they did not know what was going to happen next. This caused us to brainstorm and try to come up with various ways that we can make the worship service unique in its own right. As a result, we decided to look at every aspect of the worship service and come up with unique ways to make it different. Following are ways that we decided to put into action in order to see if it would make a difference. We wanted to know when the word “got out” that the worship experience was different, would individuals start attending church on a regular basis? Also, we wanted to know whether our worship on demand DVD would cause more members to want to tune in to the worship service because it would be something new and different each time.

Sermon

1. Congregation members and visitors are encouraged to speak up during the presentation of the spoken word – the sermon. This would allow them to be engaged in the message in a more active way rather than a passive one. The active engagement of members in the pew should set the tone for active listening as they participate in the sermon. Also, this will cause the preacher to develop a different type of sermon. That is, it will be less likely that the preacher will present his sermon from strictly reading a manuscript.
2. Plan at some point to choose a sermon from one of the hymn listed in our hymn. This will allow the participating church member to know what is coming next and be able to meditate upon what it says. It will make the hymn book come alive as the message is presented. For example, I might decide to present a sermon on the topic of praise. I will then find one of the hymns in the hymn book and use it as the basis for the sermon that day.
3. When presenting a sermon, I might use dramatic art in order to illustrate a portion of the sermon. This will allow the drama society in our church to be active in the worship experience. Family members will be excited to see other family members acting various components of the sermon. At times, the setting and context might be a contemporary one, or it may be an ancient one as described in the Bible. For example, if I am preaching about the woman who lost her coin and I might have someone dressed as a woman looked at that time. Or, I might have someone dressed in modern-day clothing with the broom in hand sweeping the floor looking for her coin.
4. Just before the communion service, I may give a sermonette that dramatizes the reading of the Scriptures. For example, I might dramatize what it was like for Jesus hanging on the cross on that Friday afternoon for the sins of the world.

5. At some point in the sermon, I might stop and ask the congregation to sing a hymn. Or, I might have a male chorus to provide a selection. On another occasion I might have the choir to sing a selection. On a rare occasion, I might sing a few lines from a song that has inspired me, or I might lead a song that I know that the congregation loves and is familiar with.

6. Allow the juniors and/or early teens to select a sermon topic for the upcoming weeks.

After I receive the sermon topics, I will plan for the youth to participate in the worship service on that particular Sunday. For example, I might have them to provide the special music for the service, have them collect the offering, be greeters at the door, read the scripture for that day, etc.

7. After a lot of planning and consultation, I will allow the youth of the church to prepare short messages. For example, I might ask certain youth of the church to prepare a 7 to 10 minute message to present to the congregation. This will address the issue of being more contemporary and less traditional.

8. On some occasions, laypersons will be invited to speak on topics that are of interest to them. For example, it may be a teacher who is burdened with the idea that individuals do not value education. It may be a person in the banking industry that has a burden to help people know how to spend their money wisely. Whatever the topic, the layperson would be able to preach the sermon and thereby provide variety and suspense to those in the congregation who are the listeners.

9. I will prepare handouts of the sermon topic so that children can fill in the colors and complete the blank statements. The goal is to have the children listen attentively so that they will be able to put the correct answers in. Also, it is hoped that parents will listen

attentively so that if the children miss something they will be able to ask their parents for the correct response.

10. It is my responsibility to prepare a Sermonic year in order to ensure that there is balance in sermon topics, style, and presentation.

11. We live in an age of technology that provides a lot of visuals. Much of what we do in life now is supported by some type of visual. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the speaker to provide visuals for those to whom he/she is speaking. The speaker needs to be creative in providing visuals. One way to provide visuals is place inserts in the bulletin and allow people to follow the preacher along as he/she delivers the sermon.

12. It would be prudent for the preacher to follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ by using simple object lessons. For example, Jesus used the things of nature to make various points. He used that which was known in order to help people understand the unknown. When a preacher is able to do this, he/she is effective in delivering the word of the Lord and people will be more apt to want to hear him because they understand the message. Therefore, when the word of the Lord is preached, this is no place to demonstrate one's educational training or advancement. The sermon should be very simple so that all can understand.

13. It will be helpful for the preacher to use research found in the social sciences. For instance, the preacher needs to understand the different types of learning modalities. That simply means the preacher needs to understand how people learn. Some learn visually, some learn through hearing, and some learn by touching or feeling. Therefore, it is important for the preacher to try to reach the audience all three modalities.

14. Some have found it to be helpful to present a 15 to 20 minutes message and then leave the pulpit. Allow people to discuss what they just heard. This certainly is a new and fresh style of presenting a sermon. This is especially effective when it is not done all the time. Again, variety in the presentation of the gospel is an effective means to enhance church attendance and active participation from the congregation.

15. Sometimes it will be very helpful and meaningful to come down from the pulpit. It will be helpful to simply walk among the people. As the preacher walks by, from time to time he/she may gently touch someone on the shoulder. This shows that the preacher is in touch with his members of the congregation and that he/she is not a stand-offish preacher.

16. Another thing that has proven to be successful is when a preacher uses a roving microphone and uses it much like a news reporter would. For example, if the preacher is preaching on the topic he/she might walk among congregants and ask a member about his/her opinion about what was stated or about what is about to be stated. This may cause a little anxiety among the members but once they get accustomed to it they certainly will say it provides variety in the worship experience.

17. A preacher might decide to present a sermon on an unresolved or controversial topic. The sermonette might show the pros of a given topic, while the other sermonette might show the cons of that same topic. This approach will spark a lot of interest and conversation. If there is a meal served after church, it will be a wonderful time to discuss the opposing views.

18. Two people might present a sermon through dialogue; they might even do some role-playing. However, it will mean that the two individuals will need to be well-prepared and

know what the expected outcome is. The dialogue should be among members of the congregation. That is, they want to present a topic so that members will think about it more or do they want to present a dialogue so that people will reach a final conclusion about something? Whatever the anticipated outcome, it should be well thought-out.

Performed Music

19. The pastor and/or music director should always seek individuals who have something different to offer in the music ministry. For example, someone in the congregation may play a flute, or is the member or of a bell choir; or they may play a xylophone. Some have even produced music using an old scrub board. Despite what the instrument is, it is important to let them express their love for God and demonstrate their God-given talent in music to the congregation. This will send a powerful message that says no matter what you do for the Lord Jesus Christ, He accepts it as long as you do it from your heart. It also sends a message that there will be variety in music.

20. If you know that family members are adept at playing instruments, have them provide music during the worship service. Or they can provide music in between Sunday School and the divine worship service. The important thing is to allow the congregation to see a variety of music within the confines of the church.

21. Before music is rendered, give the history of that song. For example, the song, “A mighty Fortress is our God,” was written by Martin Luther. It was based on the Psalm 46. Before this number is rendered, one might tell of the experiences that Martin Luther had as a reformer. One might quote from the lines of that song such as, “this body they may kill, God’s truth abideth still.” As the song is rendered it will have new meaning for those listening.

22. Instead of having someone sing a song or the congregation singing, have soft music in the background being played and have someone simply to read the words of the song.

A person can dramatize it as they read it or they can read it until how that song has impacted his/her life.

23. An illustrated song can be used during the worship experience as well. For instance, if there is someone in the congregation who has good artistic skills that person can draw as the song is being rendered. Or, for example, technology can be used to show various slides that illustrate points made from the song being rendered. Young persons in the congregation can get involved in this as well.

24. Have a day in which there is a focus on a certain type of song. For instance, there may be a day in which the emphasis is on going to heaven. Another day may be songs that tell of the experiences of our past or the experience of the past of our forefathers-spirituals. Another day it may be songs that children enjoy. Songs such as, “this little light of mine, I’m going to let it shine.”

25. Invite musicians from another congregation to provide music. For example, the Salvation Army is adept at providing music through brass instruments. Think of the dynamics a church would experience if at the beginning of the worship service they heard those brass instruments blasting throughout the congregation and the church; especially since it was never been done before. Generally speaking, all constituents of the church would have a great appreciation for this type of ministry of music.

Congregational Music

26. The congregation should be allowed to engage in singing as often as possible. It is a good idea to invite someone to accompany the organ or piano with another instrument

and invite the congregation to sing along with the ones doing the accompaniment as well as the organ and piano player. It is anticipated that this will bring excitement to the congregation. Even the young children will be excited as they hear those instruments accompanying the organ and piano.

27. Sometimes it will be good to let the appeal song be rendered by the congregation as a whole instead of an individual. It may be well to ask the congregational members to hold hands as they sing the song. This will have the congregation members feel as though they are a viable part of the worship experience at that time.

28. Have the congregation to learn a new song. It may be a song from the hymns or it could be a contemporary song that just about everyone in the congregation can relate to. It needs to be someone of experience and ability to help individuals learn the song. Therefore, it may need to be someone such as the minister of music to lead out in this endeavor.

29. One week it may be wise to do nothing but sing Scripture songs. These songs can be put up on the screen by using PowerPoint.

30. Do not always sing every verse that's written in the church hymnal. Provide variety by alternating verses from time to time. Also, sometimes let the men only and sing a certain verse. At other times let women only sing a certain verse

31. From time to time it may be good to divide the church and to have the congregation singing in rounds. It may take a long time to get them adjusted to it, but once they understand it they will generally like it very much.

32. From time to time have a member from the congregation choose a hymn and let that person tells why he/she likes that particular hymn. It will allow the members of the

congregation to get to know that member better and it may bring new meaning to that particular hymn that is rendered.

33. Sometimes it helps to have individuals sitting on the front row or in the front of the church with the microphone to help with the congregational singing. It can also help members of the congregation get in tune with the song as well as the pace of the song.

Prayer

34. When it is time to offer prayer, one can have someone from different groups within the congregation to offer prayer. For instance, it could be announced that a grandparent, a parent, Deacon, usher, etc. will be offering prayer for that particular service. A message is conveyed in the congregation that is important and vital to the fellowship and the worship experience of all.

35. Occasionally, it is good to use written prayers. These prayers should be well thought out and have a specific focus. They should be prayers that give praise to God and they should be prayers of thanksgiving. Whoever gives the prayer should not give it as though they are reading it, but it should be a prayer that people can sense comes from the heart. There are models of many prayers that individuals can use that are appropriate for the worship service.

36. Have multiple people give a prayer during the worship service. For example, one person could be responsible for asking forgiveness of sins for the corporate body; one could be responsible for giving praise and thanksgiving; and another could be responsible for interceding in behalf of the people of God.

37. Sometimes it will be very meaningful to have a child offer the morning prayer. The simple and childlike spirit given in the prayer will inspire the congregation very much.

Individuals will be there who will try to encourage the youngster as he/she offers the prayer.

38. Have a representative from a family, Sunday School class, children's division, etc. pray and offer a one sentence prayer. This approach will allow many people to participate in the worship experience during prayer time. It will provide valuable experience for individuals who stand before congregation without fear of failure. Some of the individuals might even write out their one-sentence prayer. By starting off with one sentence, it will later develop into two sentences, three sentences, etc.

39. On some special occasions it would be good to plan a "season" of prayer and then have several people pray. However, one must be careful not to make it too drawn out or it may have a negative impact - particularly on the younger worshipers.

Scripture

40. Have a family to read the Scriptures. If it's only one verse they can read a section of the verse each. If it is more than one verse, they can divide the verses up equally whatever way it is deemed to be appropriate.

41. Have a shut-in person read the Scripture for the divine worship service. Sometimes, those who are shut-in and are unable to hear the sermon through a videotape or through some other means should be allowed to recite the scripture for the Divine worship service. The shut-in person will feel great that they had an active manner to participate in the church service; and that shut-in family member will be delighted when this happens. Have a shut-in person give a few comments about the Scripture, if appropriate. The shut in person could be someone in a nursing home, someone at home, or even someone in the hospital. It may be someone in the armed services or someone who has a special

assignment and have been away from the church for an extended period of time. It may also be a person who has a job that has now allows him/her to be present at church for a number of weeks.

42. A variety of people should be chosen to read the Scriptures. Sometimes it may be a single person, a mother, a father, a grandparent, etc. It is important not to overlook college students when they return home. Despite whom the person is that person should be familiar with the Scripture so that it is read with dignity.

43. Sometimes when the Scripture is read it can be illustrated. For example, many of the songs can be illustrated by using the PowerPoint. At other times a very short video clip may be used.

44. Read the Scripture while soft background music is being played. The music may be vocal or instrumental.

45. Allow the congregation to read the Scripture responsively. If diversity of translations is a problem, put the verse on a screen or monitor.

Offering

46. In order to bring about diversity in receiving the offering, allow family members be responsible for collecting the offering. Once the offering is collected, have the appropriate personnel receive the offering and take it to its normal secure place.

47. Definitely, if it is a youth day, have the youth be responsible for collecting the offering. Or, the church can have students wear their school uniform to church that day and have them collect the offering.

48. If the church does not already do so, it can allow church members to bring their offerings to the front rather than have someone pick it up while they are in the pew. This

approach allows movement and takes away boredom. Children especially like this approach in receiving the offering.

49. Rather than let the musicians at the organ and piano play during the offering time, invite the entire congregation to sing a song. It may be a hymn or it may be a contemporary song that has been taught to the congregation. Normally, an upbeat type of song is more effective.

50. Read Scripture--i.e., the story of the widow's mites - during the offering collection. It is always appropriate to read Scripture when the offering is being received. However, the same Scripture/story should not be read week after week. There are plenty of Scriptures and stories in the Bible that are appropriate to be read during the time the offering is being received.

51. While the offering is being received this is a wonderful time for someone to read poetry. However, the person reading should be able to read it with meaning so that the listeners can be blessed by the reading of the poetry.

52. It is always appropriate to request members of the congregation to offer a silent prayer before and during the time the offering is being received. Once again, this sends a message to members of the congregation that they are important and that they are a viable part of worship.

Welcome

53. It is very important that every visitor is acknowledged when he/she comes into the church. It is appropriate to read the visitors name from the visitors' book as part of the welcome. The person who welcomes the visitors should be enthusiastic and wear a smile. It is assumed that the welcome is genuine and that it can be sensed not only by the visitor, but also by the congregation.

54. Encourage visitors' attendance at the church by inviting members of the church to introduce those they have brought. When welcoming the visitors, do not give the appearance that it is being rushed through.

55. Carve out time for church members to officially and enthusiastically welcome visitors.

56. Make sure the visitors know where the church facilities are. They should know where the restrooms are, the water fountain, the babies' room, etc.

57. Give the visitors some type of artifact they can take home with them. It may be book or some other type of artifact. It should be contact information with the artifact that is given out to the visitors.

Testimony

58. If you know that someone in the congregation has a wonderful story or testimony to share, it should be permitted for the person to share it. It may be necessary to interview someone in the congregation about his or her conversion, profession of faith, outreach, etc. good testimony is always inspirational and encouraging. However, a time limit needs to be established before the testimony is given. Some people can give a testimony for 10 to 15 minutes. If this happens, it may destroy the wonderful experience of worship.

Children will get tired of hearing that story as well as other members of the congregation. Some congregations use a timer so that after 2-3 minutes the timer automatically goes off and lets the person know that the time has ended. Often, this is more effective than a person having to tell another person that the time is up. It is less difficult for one to get angry at a time-keeping device than it is for him/her to be upset with a person who tells the individual his/her time is up.

59. It will be good to videotape someone who is at home and is considered as a shut in person. That person can be videotaped and allowed to share their testimony at church through a videotape or DVD. It lets the person know that despite their adverse condition, they are not forgotten. It also lets the congregation know that if they get in that same position they will not be forgotten.

60. Prime two or three people to react to the sermon. Allow them to outline how the truth of the sermon has affected their lives. Then, it is an opportunity to open up reactions for spontaneous comments. However, it is important not to let comments run too long.

The above are some ways the Site Team and I decided how we can improve worship. Again, these conclusions were reached after a review and discussion of the literature review. As a result of our meeting, we believe that our planning has set the tone to make the “worship on demand” DVD desirable and exciting. Thus, we determined that if people were not coming to church on a regular basis, we had to find out why. Now we can produce variety and engender enthusiasm into our church. If a person misses a worship experience, he/she will be excited (we hope) to receive a DVD of the worship experience he/she missed.

CHAPTER 5 **METHODOLOGY AND EVALUATION PROCESS**

In order to determine the effectiveness of the project, I employed three methods of evaluation. These methods used because of their abilities to assess what we want them to. They also had the capacity to provide in-depth information that may be volunteered.

Method 1 – Ongoing Focus Group

The focus group allowed me to understand and help prioritize the “felt-needs” of church members. It was a type of case study. That is, it was an informal qualitative assessment that has the ability to capture the breadth and depth of the thinking of our church members without using quantification approaches. The nature of the focus group allowed me to respond and make changes immediately and in effective ways.

Another reason I used a focus group was based on the belief that a “grassroots” participatory process would accommodate my desire to deeply understand congregants’ preferences that would result in more meaningful and broader results. I viewed the results of a focus group as a single voice speaking on behalf of the church at large. Equally important, a focus group honored participants’ time commitments, it was less labor intensive, more cost effective, and was easily organized in a short time-frame.

The focus group had a recorder present; the recorder used a flip charts. At the outset, it was established that the recorder would not be allowed to be involved in the facilitation. Video and audio recordings were considered. However, they will not be used because they tend to project the notion of intrusion. The use of audio and visual

technology adds to the levels of discomfort and distress among participants; electronic recording devices can inhibit a free exchange of dialogue. Facial expressions, body language, type of apparel and participants' identity were not integral components to the focus group.

Method 2 – Site Team Evaluation

The Site Team used an evaluation process based on the principles referred to as S.M.A.R.T goals. The group established a predetermined expected outcome and it evaluated the success of the program based on the specific expectations. The acronym S.M.A.R.T means the following: **S**- Specific; **M** – Measurable; **A**- Attainable; **R**- Realistic; and **T**-Timely

The Goal must Be Specific: The Site Team sought to evaluate whether the project is specific. In order to ensure specificity, the site team will seek to have six “W” questions answered:

Who: Who is involved in the project?

What: What do we want to accomplish?

Where: Where is the project to take place?

When: When is the project to start and when will it end?

Which: Which population will be the focus in the project?

Why: Why is this project being done?

The Goal must Be Measurable: The Site Team will establish concrete criteria so that progress was measured. For this project, the response to surveys, focus groups, and data from technology usage was used as tools for measurement. Three key questions were used as a way to evaluate the project:

- How much time is spent in viewing the program (worship on demand)?

- How many church members watch the program (worship on demand)?
- What was considered as “success”?

The Goal must Be Attainable: Site Team members will ask questions such as:

- Are the goals and outcomes possible?
- Does the church have the resources to reach the expected outcomes?
- Is there a plan for individuals to grow and mature so that the outcomes can be reached?

The Goal must Be Realistic: The Site Team determined whether the expected outcomes were ones that a young person in our modern society can be expected to reach. That is, was the expected outcome too high? Or conversely, was the expected outcome too low? Did the expected outcomes cause the youth to be viewed as “out of touch”? Were the expected outcomes within the perimeter of the culture and society they live from day-to-day?

The Goal must be Timely: Site Team members determined whether the project was done within an expected time-frame. That is, were the expected outcomes to occur within days, weeks, months, or years? A commitment to a deadline helped the Site Team focus its efforts on completing expected outcomes on or before a set date. This part of the S.M.A.R.T. criteria was designed to prevent expected outcomes from being negatively impacted by the day-to-day crises that often occurs with projects of this nature. In addition, timeliness helped create a sense of urgency. Participants and evaluators were able to move forward with the thought that there was an end in sight.

Method 3 – Triangulation of Data

Triangulation is a process of using three points of data that may indicate similarities. It can also show differences that need to be discussed. When the data was synthesized, it allowed individuals to make decisions regarding outcomes and whether something needed to be changed. When a single evaluation source was used, it may consider factors that could affect the outcome. That is, when an evaluation was done based on a single piece of data, it was subject to environmental or motivational influences which could have affected its accuracy.

Triangulation of data was used because it had the ability to make use of pre-existing data sources. This helped individuals have rapid comprehension of the situation. When information was gathered by different methods and people, the findings tended to corroborate each other and thereby reduced the probability of bias and random error. An outstanding feature of triangulating data was that it accommodated the combination of data gathered from qualitative and quantitative data.

The data that was used in this project came from three sources. Namely, the data came from the focus group; the Site Team; and from the church at large (survey). It was expected that data from the three sources would fundamentally reach similar concerns and conclusions. However, if they do not, it would have led me to analyze the reasons why they do not match. In the end, it increased the validity of the project.

CHAPTER 6

MINISTERIAL COMPETENCIES

The Site Team considered the notion that not all pastors are equally capable in all areas of ministry. However, the Site Team determined that there should be some minimum competencies if a minister is to remain as a pastor or if a pastor seeks higher educational credentials; namely, the Doctor of Ministry Degree. As such, the team agreed that it was important to appropriately assess an individual's ability to lead a congregation, adequately shepherd a flock, keep the flock together, care for the needs of the congregation, help it grow, and be involved in the local community.

The Site Team Leader informed me that they considered a number of things as they tried to determine my level of competency. First, they considered what John Wesley explained two centuries ago as he addressed ministerial competency. He promoted the idea that there were three questions that should be used as a starting point: (1) Does the minister know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior? (2) Does the minister possess gifts for ministry? (3) Has the minister shown fruit in his/her ministry? I was informed that these questions served as a basis for assessing my ministerial competency.

According to the Site Team Leader, the first question subsequently led the group to inquire about my relationship with Jesus. They asked whether I demonstrated love, faith, peace, and joy. Do I demonstrate that I know Jesus personally? If I appear to "know" Jesus, what is the depth of that relationship? That is, is it one of total commitment; is my "walk" with Him consistent? They discussed the above questions in a reflective and honest manner.

The second question involved my natural and cultivated gifts or abilities to minister. They wanted to determine whether I had the ability to discern theological error? How well do I know the Bible? How well do I communicate the basic tenets of the gospel? The Site Team analyzed my sermons and my ability as a counselor. They discussed my skills in leadership, interpersonal relationships, outreach, etc.

After the group duly examined the above two questions, they determined that they needed to examine my record. They wanted to know what had I done in ministry. Do I have tangible results? The Site Team believed that a competent minister needs to have a record that unquestionably demonstrates fruit from his/her labor. Fortunately, the Site Team determined that I did demonstrate an abundance of fruit from the labor I engaged in at my church. Since the above three questions outcomes were satisfactorily addressed, the group decided that they would examine specific competencies relative to my work as a minister.

Competence Assessment

The Site Team Leader informed me that on one occasion that the group met, they struggled with the notion of what constitutes competency for a minister? That is, how can it be authentically assessed? One person on the team is a human resource person. She suggested that a working definition should foster the idea that competency occurs when a person fulfills one's job description. Someone asked, "Which job description?" Is it the one culled by the leaders of our denomination? Is it a job description developed by the minister? Is it a job description created by the local church? If the congregation creates a job description, is it based on the Bible or the desires of the congregants? For example, suppose the church says that my job description is as follows: "Fulfill your pastoral duties; love us and care for us. Make regular and frequent visitations. Be with church

members during various crises. Let each sermon be interesting and let it not offend parishioners. Represent the church in worthily ways to the community. Provide the congregation with regular assurances that it is right where it should be. Administer the sacraments faithfully and create programs that will keep the youth off the streets and keep them in the church. The minister must manage the church so that others will want to attend various services and the youth are to remain interested in spiritual things.”

In the end, members of the Site Team decided to evaluate competency based on the Bible. This was an important decision because they discussed the idea that we live in the rational and scientific age of the twenty first century. The age we live in has had an impact on pastoral theology. That is, the social sciences have greatly influenced the role of the minister. The pastor has become a counselor, social worker, psychologist, manager, youth director, administrator, recreation director, financial expert, leader, community advocate, etc. Liberal, humanistic, naturalistic presuppositions robbed the ministry of its supernatural aspects.

The Site Team employed the biblical job description for ministers that is found in Ephesians 4. This model focuses on the tasks of equipping congregants for ministry, preaching, prayer, and provide spiritual direction. The team concluded that ministers who perform this job description are competent. They decided that if they were going to be biblical in their assessment of competence, they needed to begin with a biblical job description rather than one borrowed from the business world. The team decided that it was best not to fabricate a job description based on their desires, traditions, belief systems, or their upbringing. Finally, the Site Team concluded that ultimately, the only question that really mattered was whether a minister is doing the will of God - not

whether a minister is trying to please the denominational leaders, the congregation or the community. This is the context in which the Site Team members evaluated my competency.

Communicator

We perceive Bishop McPherson to be an effective communicator. We have observed that he is able communicate effectively within and outside the church. He is able to employ a variety of tools and styles so that people are inspired and informed. He uses a variety of means to communicate. For example, Bishop McPherson uses technology, focus groups, small group discussions, the pulpit, telephone, emails, etc. in order to keep congregants informed and inspired. His ability to engage in discussions without dominating them allows him to be viewed as an effective communicator.

Bishop McPherson is able to select the appropriate mode of communication in order to reach his targeted audience. That is, he does not use the same modes of communication to get a message across to young adults and senior citizens. As a result, all populations feel as though he is speaking to them directly.

Biblical Knowledge

It is important that a church leader be able to expound upon the scriptures appropriately. In order for this to happen, the minister must be rooted and grounded in scriptural knowledge. The leader must be able to use the scriptures in ways that maintains integrity to the original intent, while at the same time make the scriptures relevant. Our denomination accepts both testaments as the inspired word of God. We observed that Bishop McPherson has a rich knowledge of both. Whether he preaches from the Old or New Testament, he causes the Bible to be viewed in light of the gospel and he interprets scripture with a contemporary flavor.

Bishop McPherson is able to identify the experience and culture of the biblical writer and compare and contrast it to the listener's/reader's experience and culture. He emphasizes that this is important when interpreting the Bible. In addition, his biblical knowledge allows him to provide listener's/reader's information regarding the economic, socio-political, and historical contexts of a given passage of scripture. His use of Greek and Hebrew informs us that he analyzes scripture using current research and scholarly methods. His library is filled with critical commentaries, sermon helps, word study books, and other scholarly resources. These help him acquire biblical knowledge and make practical application of what he learned.

Church Administration and Planning

Bishop McPherson has demonstrated an unusual ability to practice acceptable principles of good administration and planning. He is able to plan for and implement short and long-range goals designed to enhance congregational life. He plans with appropriate bodies within the church.

He has an authentic leadership style and he has shared that style with church leaders and the congregation at large. He is consistent with how all church ministries need to operate. For example, there are three fundamental things he looks for from each ministry. Namely: (1) What is the purpose/focus of the ministry? That is, what are the clear and definable goals? (2) What is needed for the success of the ministry? What are the resources? What resources are needed? What strategies will be used to obtain the ministry's goals? What is the schedule and timeframe? Does the ministry align with the church's overall goals? (3) What evaluation plan is in place? How often will the evaluation occur? Are there varieties of evaluation methods? Who will do the evaluation? Will authentic feedback be provided?

As Bishop McPherson strives for unity and consistency, he insists that all ministries follow the practices, policies, and procedures established by the church. Emphasis is placed on the notion that each ministry must demonstrate an understanding of church policies regarding confidentiality and privacy issues. There must be an accounting system that accommodates acceptable record-keeping practices. That is, records must be maintained as required by church policy and secular entities.

Bishop McPherson strongly believes in planning. As such, we have one, two, three, four, and five year plans for the church. Periodically, all plans are reviewed and adjusted accordingly. He believes that it is important to plan so that the church can measure how it is doing in relationship to the great commission.

When we plan at our church, sometimes Bishop McPherson takes select individuals on a retreat. While at the retreat, we are able to seek God's guidance and plan accordingly. Other learning activities occur at the church with church leaders. Planning-groups normally are comprised of individuals that reflect the composition of the church. Often, Bishop McPherson asks that the format for planning be one based on group "consensus." This approach seems to keep the group unified.

Pastoral Care

Pastoral care is an important competency that we discussed. We feel that it is important because competency or lack of competency will cause the congregation to carry out the great commission, or it potentially will be a cause for its downfall. As such, pastoral care, we believe, is fundamental to the call of a pastor. We believe that it is important that a pastor be able to engage congregants with tenets of sympathy and empathy. Bishop McPherson has demonstrated that he possesses the compassion of Christ. In the context of pastoral care, he is sensitive to one's context, culture,

background, and present situation; he is able to convey hope to the marginalized and despondent.

Bishop McPherson apparently possesses self-knowledge which allows him to provide support within the context of his strengths and limitations. He is ever-aware of the resources available to help others improve their situations. When resources are limited or unavailable, he reaches out to entities outside the confines of the church. He has demonstrated that he understands the balance between pastoral authority and its relationship to pastoral care.

We have observed that Bishop McPherson's pastoral care is sensitive to and respectful of diversity and differences. These include ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, age, education, disability, cultural heritage, religious beliefs, and reputation. We have noticed that Bishop McPherson provides effective pastoral care to those who are experiencing grief and loss. His work with Hospice individuals helps to authenticate competency in the area of pastoral care.

Bishop McPherson demonstrates competency in this area because he employs the disciplines of psychology, sociology, human development, and spiritual growth. He is able to articulate theological and biblical foundations for pastoral care. He uses the above to help individuals engage in introspection (when appropriate) and help them clarify their issues while using verbal and non-verbal modes of communication. When appropriate and necessary, Bishop McPherson makes referrals so that the individual can receive the best support available. This supports feelings of trust and confidentiality church members have towards him.

Worship and Preaching

Bishop McPherson is quite capable of proclaiming the word of God and helps the congregation apply the word of God to their daily lives. It is evident that he knows and understands the theory and practice of Christian preaching. His sermons help the members of the church recognize and respond to the presence of God in the worship experience. Bishop McPherson uses multiple homiletic styles and approaches in order to appropriately address various preaching situations. When preaching, he is able to present a warm and engaging pulpit presence. It is apparent that he is aware of the impact of words, phrases, and idioms so that they are not offensive to his listeners.

Bishop McPherson is adept at preparing sermons that are practical, exegetically sound, and purposeful. His sermons reflect the fundamental beliefs espoused by the Church of God of Prophecy. Bishop McPherson's sermons are flavored with considerations of his audience. That is, he considers their age, culture, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, etc.

Relative to worship, Bishop McPherson has articulated biblical and theological basis for Christian worship. For example, our worship services demonstrate an order for worship that connects both contextual and theological sources. As such, he has affirmed his skills and ability to lead a meaningful worship service. Bishop McPherson significantly makes contributions to the variety and choice of music used during the worship service. He has established a committee to evaluate effectiveness of music during the worship experience.

Bishop McPherson continues to demonstrate an awareness of the space, seating, lighting, sound, and other spatial considerations for worship. To him, each worship service is not the same. Therefore, he demonstrates appropriate ways to adapt worship

space for a given service. In order to accomplish the above, Bishop McPherson collaborates effectively with individuals responsible for preparing the sound, music, lighting, technology, and the setting. In fact, before an individual uses the microphone to speak, he ensures that the preacher is allowed an opportunity to become familiar with the sound system that affects the delivery of the sermon.

We admire the manner in which Bishop McPherson speaks with clarity and appropriate timing. His leadership with public prayer is extemporaneous and the congregation responds with fervor and enthusiasm. Thus, Bishop McPherson has the ability to plan and lead exciting and meaningful worship. He does the above by working with the worship team, musicians, and congregational members. He understands that the church's worship hour can have a significant impact on Christian discipleship.

Leadership

Our denomination demands that church pastors and denominational leaders demonstrate high levels of proficiency as leaders. One characteristic that Bishop McPherson has demonstrated as a leader is his unconditional love for his people. Despite the notion that it is a “thankless” job and that members can be profoundly unreasonable, he nevertheless shows love to everyone. We are aware that it is sometimes difficult to love those who complain and spread falsehoods about an individual. He continues to be steadfast with his pursuit to model love after the manner of Jesus. That is, Bishop McPherson expresses an intense love for the members of his congregation; he loves as Christ has loved us.

Bishop McPherson is a persistent leader. He has a long-term perspective of various ministries and he is able to lead toward progress one incremental step at a time. As a leader, he desires for the church to be healthy and thriving well beyond the time he

is pastor. He has a vision that extends beyond today or even the next few years. Bishop McPherson paves the way and he leads by example. During the church's darkest hours, he forged ahead and church members followed him. During such times, the church becomes equipped to meet greater challenges ahead. That is, as a leader, Bishop McPherson equipped congregants with appropriate training and resources.

Bishop McPherson promotes teamwork and conveys a sense of urgency to complete the church's mission. He has demonstrated competency in helping others grow in their abilities to serve in various ministries. He takes quality time to address the concerns that others may have. His "people skills" has earned him the trust of the people he serves.

Bishop McPherson leadership style can be characterized as a transformational one. That is, he started with the development of his vision and a determination to lead others about the future with a plan to bring about significant changes. As a transformational leader, his goal is to overtly transform the organization (church) as a whole. In the process, we have seen followers transformed in thought, attitude, commitment, and service. Thus, members of the church have become products of the transformation. Within the church, Bishop McPherson has developed leaders from within the church body. Already, individuals have been trained to carry on the activities and vision of the church in his absence. Bishop McPherson has successfully done this in every department of the church.

As our leader, Bishop McPherson has consistently demonstrated an insatiable desire to constantly improve. He shares with church leaders at the end of each year what he plans to do to improve his leadership skills for the next year. This leadership strategy

has been contagious at our church. That is, church leaders and those who aspire to become leaders follow his model of improving oneself each year. He helps congregants improve themselves by helping them determine whether their goals are too lofty.

We feel that Bishop McPherson has demonstrated competency as a leader because he believes in the adage: "Practice what you preach." Even the youth at our church comment that he is consistent with what he says and what he does. As a result, all populations within the church follow his leadership. It is wonderful to see a leader who has credibility from the members of his church. Thus, when he speaks, people at the church listen and will generally give him the benefit of the doubt when they are unsure about things.

Therefore, we the members of the Site Team do agree that the aforementioned competencies are evident in the ministerial practice of Bishop McPherson. We agree that he is competent in all areas listed above. In addition, we want it to be known that we have not taken our responsibility of evaluating his competency lightly. We spent a lot of time trying to be fair to him, while at the same time present a credible profile of how we view his competency in each area listed above.

Competencies for Development

Change Agent – To address the problems and skills needed to become an effective change agent.

It is a generally accepted fact that change upsets some people. Those who oppose change are generally written off because people say well can't win them all. On the one hand, however, the church cannot allow a few who oppose change to slow down the progress of the church. On the other hand, one might say that changes are not all ways necessary in order to move the church forth. So there must be a balance between the two.

If one is not careful, it can divide the church. How tragic it would be if one was to bring about change while at the same time it weakens the unity of the church. Thus, the purpose of the change is not actuated and it affects the church negatively.

The following covers more than just pastoral care. It covers communication as well as worship and preaching. I chose to address the matter under this section because of how it can affect a person emotionally and spiritually. Therefore, I realized that the three competencies can be integrated into one.

Upon reflection of my competency as a pastoral care person, I realized that bringing about change is not easy for church members. As such, I knew that I needed to become more competent in the area of pastoral care. That is, I need to provide pastoral care for members who may have difficulty with change. Realizing that this idea of change can impact members for years to come, I decided to renew my efforts in finding out how social science can help me in my endeavor to bring about change.

A great number of psychologists believed that different thinking styles are housed in the two hemispheres of the brain. They call it the left brain and the right brain. Psychologists believe that when we communicate with individuals we may use one side of the brain; others in the congregation will use the other side of their brain. For example, the educational system in America is geared primarily for left brain thinkers. Researchers have found that those who drop out of school are predominantly right brained thinkers. Thus, there are many who may not have dropped out of school if they had been appropriately communicated through the right brain.

Researchers state that when one listens to a sermon or a speech, it generally affects the strengths of the left brain. This leads me to wonder whether I have narrowed

the spectrum of the people of the congregation by speaking only to the left brain.

Following are questions I must ask myself regarding the left brain and right brain information that is now available. I wonder whether speaking to only one side of the brain hasn't:

- Contributed to some of the right brain people becoming inactive in the church?
- Impacted the attendance rate at our church?
- Contributed to the trend to accept the culture of society rather than accept the culture of the Christian faith?
- Contributed to the notion of some to believe that the church is meaningless, boring, has no life, and lacks warmth?
- Impacted the growth of individuals?

According to Barbara Vitale, the left and right brain mirror each other physiologically. However, they differ in structure and function.⁹⁷

Without being too technical, the left brain control such things as handwriting, phonics, locating details and facts, reading, reciting, interpreting symbols, talking, language, and following directions. The right brain is normally associated with skills such as the sense of touch, spatial relationships, music, singing, emotions, one's feelings, patterned, shapes, mathematical computations, colors, creativity, art expression, and visualization.⁹⁸

Information is processed in a different way from the two sides of the brain. The left brain is more verbal - using words to describe may modify - abstract, reality-based,

⁹⁷ Barbara Vitale, *Unicorns are Real: A Right Brained Approach to Learning* (New York: Warner Books, 1982), 1.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 12.

sequential, and is logical in its functions. Whereas the right brain is holistic (sees things as a whole), it is fantasy oriented, it does not normally have a sense of time, it is intuitive, analytical, concrete, and relatively nonverbal.⁹⁹

Thus, the two halves of the brain specialize in different functions. However, this should not lead one to conclude that they were independent of each other. In fact, it has been shown that the two hemispheres work quite well together.¹⁰⁰ No individual uses only one side of his brain or hemisphere. We all use both sides of our brain. However, one side is more dominant than the other and therefore individuals tend to have a preference for either side of the brain.

The challenge comes as to how to reach right brained worshipers. That is, how can the preacher involve both hemispheres of the brain during the worship services? One effective way is to model after Jesus. With many of his audience he used parables, similes, allegories, and metaphors. All of the aforementioned function in similar ways. According to Unger, parables make the truth of God more intelligible cause it presents it more vividly to the human mind it tends to bring the light to the hearer because it does not appeal “to the understanding [left brain] only, but to the feeling [right brain]... imagination [right brain], in short to the whole man, calling all its powers and faculties into pleasurable activity; and all things thus learned with delight are those longest remembered.”¹⁰¹

Another way to reach both hemispheres of the brain is to use drama. John the Baptist came to Jesus and inquired whether He was the Messiah. Jesus could have given

⁹⁹ Ibid., 15.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Merrill Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago, Moody Press, 1960), 825.

them a description of who He was, or referred them back to the Scriptures to read up on who the Messiah would be and what he would be like. Instead, Jesus chose to use drama to answer their question. That is He chose to dramatize the truth. He told them to watch what He was doing (Matthew 11:2 – 6; Luke 7:19-22). After they watched Him and He dismissed them, He told them to tell John what they had “seen [right brain] and heard [left brain and right brain].”

Jesus was a master in using visual aids. The disciples had entered into an argument regarding who would be greatest in the kingdom of God. Jesus could have provided them a highly scholarly treatise on the subject. Instead, Jesus chose to use a child as a visual aid to make an indelible imprint on the minds of his disciples (Matthew 18:1-6). As one studies the life of Christ, one can find that Jesus often used illustrations from nature and human beings in order to make a significant point.

Another avenue to reach both sides of the brain is through the use of music. It is a gift that God has given to the world that, if used properly, it can have a very positive impact on human beings. Music has been called a universal language and that it can communicate information in ways that other forms of communication cannot. Music has the capacity to generate a variety of reactions in each half of the brain simultaneously.¹⁰² In addition, music affects in similar ways the moods of people of different backgrounds. Research indicates that people have no choice but to respond to music. Musical dramas can be very effective as a means to stimulate and use both sides of the brains hemispheres. Public speaking is a tool that can be used as well. Preaching is normally viewed as a left brain activity, while public speaking is listed as an activity that uses both

¹⁰² MacDonald Critchley and R.A. Henson, *Music and the Brain* (London: William Heinemann Medical Books, 1980), 7-9.

sides of the brain hemispheres. In addition, it would be helpful to allow members of the congregation to engage in responsive activities. That is, allow the people to engage in activities that will influence them to respond emotionally and physically as well as intellectually during the worship experience. For example, the clapping of the hands or saying “amen” during the worship service tends to activate both sides of the brains hemispheres. As a result, this can make the worship service more meaningful and effective.

In sum, the right brain is primarily associated with emotions, feelings, visualization, relationships, meditation, etc. Thus, it can be concluded that the right brain is more inclined to accommodate spiritual activities. If the aforementioned is true, is it any wonder why church attendance may be down? Pastors and church leaders must find ways to address the needs of dominant right brained thinkers. However, it would be more effective to address the needs of both simultaneously. At the very least, however, a pastor and church leader must address the left brain and right brain needs at some point throughout the church service.

Why some people oppose change

Central to the idea of change is for one to ask why some good people are opposing change. First, it may be due to the person’s personality type. This personality type may be acquired through nurture or it may be the person’s nature. Nevertheless, an individual’s personality plays a huge part in determining how he/she will react to change.

A second reason one may react in a negative way toward change is because of a person’s need for stability. We live in a society in which things are constantly changing. This is uncomfortable for some individuals. It brings about insecurity and causes people to look for more stability in their lives. Church is a place that many people look for that

stability. Therefore, it is not surprising that some people feel threatened when the one institution they thought had stability all of a sudden appears to be unstable. When it is announced or demonstrated that there is a change in what they have become comfortable with, it becomes an unsettling experience for those church members. Therefore, it is important to be sensitive to the feelings and needs of church members who are seeking stability in their lives.

There is an adage that says that we are “creatures of habit.” For whatever reason, once humans get accustomed to something is difficult to bring about change. Obviously, it is the fear of the unknown; the fear of not knowing what is going to happen next may bring anxiety to an individual. Apparently, this is part of our sin nature that we have inherited from our parents and generations before us. Individuals become uncomfortable with that which is unfamiliar to them. It is like taking a trip and driving to a place that one has never been before. Imagine driving on a dark road at night and the GPS no longer works; there is no roadmap. To make matters worse, there are no sign and no other vehicles traveling on the road. While traveling, one discovered that the cell phone does not work because there is not a satellite in the area. Yet, you are expected to find a house hidden in the woods and you have no sense of direction relative as to where you are. This well could be the way that many people feel when they are expected to accept change.

Whenever I make hospital visits for the elderly in my church, I often speak to the chaplain at the hospital. I tried to get a grip on how the church member is adjusting to his/her environment. Invariably, the chaplain or some medical person will inform me that the person I am visiting is having difficulty adjusting to a new environment. One way they help the elderly adjust to a new environment is to bring pictures or some item of that

nature that is familiar to the patient. Individuals who might be suffering from Alzheimer's disease will often have family members' pictures in their room. This is done to create an environment of familiarity. The point here is that change is difficult for some, and especially the elderly.

It is important for me to understand that I am not to use the weight of my office to bring about change too readily. I must be aware that some members will see change as being a sinful act. They do not have the theological background that others or I might have, and they therefore tend to see things as being either right or wrong. If there is a change, they may see things as being wrong and therefore sinful. For example, if the church service is made more attractive for the youth of the church, the elderly tend to think that church leaders have succumb to the culture of society and have therefore fallen into the temptation of allowing Satan to use them to pervert the church. Thus, if a pastor takes a fast route to bring about innovation or change, he/she may alienate various segments of the congregation and it may decrease the roster of supporters.

Therefore, I have concluded that it is better to use a slow approach to bring about change in our congregation. The reason for this is that we have a good portion of our membership that is classified as being elderly. When a slow process approach is used, it allows the church's machinery within its structure more time to adjust to new ideas and new approaches. Thus, church leaders and I (specifically Site Team members) must tread softly as we bring about change with then our congregation. Namely, changes within the worship experience.

As I move forward, there are guidelines that I plan to follow in order to move our congregation to accept change. It is an awesome responsibility that I have to bring about

change in the way that it prospers the church. Just as Satan attacked the early Christian church while in its infancy, I anticipate that he will do the same as I try to lead our church through change. Therefore, I must do what the apostle Paul says in the book of Ephesians: “Put on the whole armor of God.” (Ephesians 6:11).

Following are guidelines I will seek to bring about change within our church.

Do not be afraid of change. As rituals are repeated over and over again it has potential to kill personal piety and have a negative impact on corporate worship. I will look for ways to improve our worship experience.

When significant changes are introduced, do so in a gentle manner. I will bring about changes in a gradual manner and lay the groundwork for those changes with the congregation. Like other members of society, members in the pews do not like sudden and shocking changes. I will educate my congregation on a gradual basis. This means that I must be organized and engage in sufficient planning for this to be a success.

Employ the democratic process. I will work in harmony with the church board, Site Team members, and other organizations within the church body. In order for change to be successful I will need the support of every member possible. I am committed to hear the voice and concerns of all constituents in my congregation.

Refrain from duplicating another church’s program. If I decide to use ideas that are effective in another church, I must be careful not to try and duplicate the entire program that the other church may be using. I must always be aware that my situation in my congregation is quite different than that of the church I am seeking to use its program. For example, I must be aware of the culture within the community as well as the culture within my local congregation. What is successful in California may not be successful in

New York City. Or, what is successful with the church in the north may not be successful with the church located in the South. It is my responsibility to use that which will be suited for my congregation. Again, I am to consider all entities represented in the congregation that I pastor.

I will not allow myself to become discouraged. I must constantly remind myself that change does not come easy. I can look at the life and teachings of Jesus and see that for 3½ years he tried to teach his disciples what his heavenly father was like. While the Last Supper with His disciples, Philip asked Him to show them the Father. For 3½ years, Jesus had been showing them the Father through the life that He believed. Yet Philip had not reached the point in his Christian experience that he was able to understand what Jesus taught. The change that Jesus sought to bring about in the thinking of his disciple was not fully successful at that point. Therefore, I am reminded that few historical innovations did not appear immediately; nor did they come easy.

Strategies Used:

- Increase awareness and understanding of need for change
- Create a receptive and supportive environment for change
- Establish a team
- Create an action plan
- Clarified/Prioritized the goal
- Brainstormed ideas with stakeholders
- Established objectives
- Created a timeline
- Created accountability system
- Participated in seminars, workshops, webinars, and academic courses
- Met with notable community leaders who are effective change agents

Evaluation

- Solicited feedback from the church board and Site Team members.
- Had discussions with small groups.
- Had a summit with the entire church body and solicit feedback.

At the end of each of the above sessions, paper and pencil questionnaires were given to participants to complete. The assessment will include paper and pencil questionnaires. It consisted of a five-point Likert evaluation scale:

- (Strongly disagree; Disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Agree; Strongly agree).
- 80% of participants must score at least agree or strongly agree.

Also, there were opportunities for verbal and written reflections (verbal ones were charted).

As a Community Developer. This competency was applicable to my prophetic role which includes my responsibility for service beyond the gathered congregation (church).

Strategies

- 1) Created an understanding of the principles of community work
 - a) Community meetings, newsletters, flyers, letters, bulletin inserts, etc.
- 2) Developed community information and relationships
 - a) Advance leadership development opportunities
- 3) Established and developed community leadership and networks
 - a) Assisted individuals/groups with designing/ accessing leadership development pathways
- 4) Developed community programs
 - a) Identified sources of leadership support – services, resources, people, and programs
- 5) Engaged in community action and support it
 - a) Supported individuals/groups with leadership development

Evaluation:

The following questions will be asked in order to evaluate:

- To what degree is there inter- and intra-community cooperation?

- Is there an increase in community dialogue about addressing various problems?
- Is there certifiable collaboration among individuals, institutions and community-based organizations?
- Are new community coalitions established and/or revived?

At the end of each of the above sessions, paper and pencil questionnaires will be given to participants to complete. The assessment will include paper and pencil questionnaires. It will consist of a five-point Likert evaluation scale:

- (Strongly disagree; Disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Agree; Strongly agree).
- 80% of participants must score at least agree or strongly agree.

Evaluation:

- Ensured that there is attendance of 75% of those who signed up for focus group.
Attendance was recorded.
- Had ongoing reflections and discussions regarding sermons and Bible study series. During reflections and discussions, responses and statements were recorded on large chart paper as individuals “share out.”
- A five-point Likert evaluation scale will be completed by participants: (Strongly disagree; Disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Agree; Strongly agree)
- 80% of participants must score agree or strongly agree.

Goal 2

Developed a team by recruiting and training church leaders that became active participants.

Strategies:

1. Determined criteria for team membership and determined number of team members d
2. Selected team members and provided them with orientation

3. Developed action research plan with team members
4. Trained church leaders regarding the new model for ministry.
5. Trained the church at-large regarding the new model for ministry

Evaluation:

- Proposed that a method to determine whether a measure passes will be done through consensus. If a simple majority of the groups agree to the proposal, then all subsequent plans and actions will be done through the consensus method of approval. Thus, the criteria and number of team members reached through consensus (strategy 1).
- For strategies 2, 3, 4, and five, I will use a three-point evaluation system. The three points will be as follows: the participants' satisfaction level, the participants' learning, and the participants' projected application of learning. Participants were asked to rate the aforementioned based on four points of criteria:

Content- The relevance, coherence, clarity, value, difficulty, and importance of the topic presented.

Process- The quality of the instruction, activities, participants' engagement, and quality of the facilitator's presentation will be evaluated.

Context- Was the setting appropriate and were the facilities accommodating?

Awareness- Participants will be asked to what extent they were aware of the purpose and goals of the activity they participated.

- Paper and pencil questionnaires will be given to participants to complete. A five-point Likert evaluation scale will be completed by participants: (Strongly disagree; Disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Agree; Strongly agree).
- 80% of participants must score at least agree or strongly agree.

There will be opportunities for verbal and written reflections (verbal ones will be charted).

- Attendance of 75% of team members at orientation. Attendance will be recorded.
- Participation of 75% of team members with action research. Attendance will be recorded.

Goal 3

Develop a new model for ministry.

Strategies Used:

1. Produce a manual that describes the project from beginning to end.
2. Celebrated the new model for ministry.
3. “Church on demand” team was established.

Evaluation:

- Completed outline for manual. It will be reviewed by Site Team members and revised/edited per the team’s input.
- Church members were trained on the appropriate use of the manual. At the end of the training, each successful participant will receive a certificate of completion. Success is defined as mastering at least 75% of the material in the manual. At the end of each training session listed above, an assessment will be given to each participant.
- The assessment included paper and pencil questionnaires. It
- consisted of a five-point Likert evaluation scale:
- (Strongly disagree; Disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Agree; Strongly agree).
- 80% of participants must score at least agree or strongly agree.
- After church members are trained, the church placed on its calendar a day of celebration. At the celebration, individuals will be presented their certificates of completion.

APPENDICES

**APPENDIX A
PROPOSAL**

CHURCH ON DEMAND

By

BASIL E. MCPHERSON

DEMONSTRATION PROJECT PROPOSAL

New York Theological Seminary

2013

Challenge Statement

I serve as the Pastor of the Bushwick family Ministry, a ministry of the Church of God of prophecy, in Brooklyn, N.Y. Ninety-five % of the congregation comes from outside the community and church membership has decreased dramatically over the past five (5) years because of relocation and aging. This has caused the church leadership to restructure its worship options. This demonstration project will create a “Church on Demand” technology model that will engage the membership of this community to participate in the regular worship service.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTING.....	3
CHAPTER 2 PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS	12
CHAPTER 3 PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION	15
CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	17
CHAPTER 5 EVALUATION PROCESS	19
CHAPTER 6 MINISTERIAL COMPETENCIES	24
APPENDICES	
APPENDIX A.....	37
APPENDIX B.....	43
BIBLIOGRAPHY	44

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTING

The Setting

Our church teaches that the mission of the church is to take the gospel to the entire world; it is to be fundamentally done through the organized church. As such, we are organized to provide services to those who are part of the body of Christ as well as those who are not. That is, our two-pronged mission is to nurture the members of our congregation and engage in outreach to those who are categorized as “unchurched.”

Mission Reflections

Our church teaches that the mission of the church is to take the gospel to the entire world; it is to be fundamentally done through the organized church. As such, we are organized to provide services to those who are part of the body of Christ as well as those who are not. Our two-pronged mission is to nurture the members of our congregation and engage in outreach to those who are categorized as “unchurched.”

Our church believes in the fundamental teachings of Jesus when he said, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”

Matthew 28:19-20.

Our denomination contends that when believers in Christ unite as a congregation to do the work that Jesus commissioned the church to do, we must ask a fundamental question: How can we best organize ourselves to allow the church to function and fulfill its divine purpose? As such, our church follows a principle applied by architects - “form

follows function.” Similarly, we believe that the “form” or structure of our church’s ministry should follow the “function” and purpose of the church. It is to this end that our church body is designed to carry out the “great commission.”

Function and Structure

The Church’s Basic Function

Our church believes that in order to have a meaningful functioning church, it is crucial to have an understanding of how the church is to function. Based on the ideologies and understanding of the church’s function, we will subsequently be able to incorporate an adequate structure.

We reflected upon the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 and at the early church in Acts 2:42-47 (other scriptures as well), we concluded that there are four fundamental functions or areas of ministry. The four fundamental functions are as follows (listed alphabetically):

1. Equipping, Teaching, Bible Study ... - Matthew 28:20; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; John 14:26
2. Evangelism, Outreach, Missions ... - Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 5:20; Mark 16:15
3. Fellowship, Encouraging, Accountability ... - Hebrews 3:13, 10:24-25; 2 Timothy 4:2
4. Praise, Prayer, Worship ... - Ephesians 5:19-20, 6:18; Psalms 33:1

Further, we believe that the above four areas are represented by four relational aspects of the church. Namely, they include a relationship:

- Between the church and those outside of it
- Within the church
- Towards God
- God has toward the church

In addition, our church structure is designed to address directional words that describe the direction of the relationship. These include:

Out-Reach: The church reaching out to those outside the church. (*Evangelism, Outreach, Missions*)

In-Reach: The church reaching in to those inside the church. (*Fellowship, Encouraging, Accountability*)

Up-Reach: The church reaching up by communicating and giving to God. (*Praising, Prayer, Worship*)

Down-Reach: God reaching down by communicating and giving to the church. (*Equipping, Teaching, Bible Study*)

It is our belief that all of the above relationships must work together so that each entity can function properly. The above are components of discipleship process – the Great Commission. The leadership at our church has observed that the third area of function - Fellowship, Encouraging, and Accountability – needs to be addressed at our church. As such, this is the area that this project is focused.

Church's Basic Structure

Our church teaches that a very significant part of the church's structure is the Chief Shepherd - Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23, 4:15-16; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13). He binds and holds the church's body together. Without Him as the head of the church, it would not be able to function or accomplish its mission. Beneath the Chief Shepherd (Jesus), there are under shepherds (overseers, elders or pastors); they are the spiritual leaders of the church. These spiritual leaders may be comprised of individuals who have dedicated their livelihoods to ministry, while others may make a living elsewhere.

However, the primary focus of both groups is to oversee the spiritual concerns of the church (Acts 6:1-4)

Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” (ESV)¹

The above passage shows that the early church’s spiritual leaders (twelve apostles) saw a need to remain focused on the spiritual matters of ministry. As a result, the office of deacon was created to provide support and service to the spiritual leadership – deacon addressed the other primarily physical aspects of ministry. This prevented the spiritual leadership from becoming preoccupied with non-spiritual matters. Thus, our church subscribes to the above model of church structure. We believe that the model will help our church reach its fullest potential.

Our denomination and local church subscribes to the scripture that says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish..." -Proverbs 29:18. In recent years, we have tried to help our local congregation and the community by clearly defining our role with both entities. Our vision has been to establish and maintain ministries that empower individuals and help them see their lives united with Christ and to explore what it means to be a true disciple of Christ. We endeavor them to empower themselves through the lenses of the church, home, peers, school, work places, community, etc. Our church promotes the notion that God’s way is always the best way.

¹ English Standard Version (ESV). This translation was started in the early 1990s by Dr. Lane T. Dennis. The goal was to provide a new literal translation offered by competent pastors and scholars. Subsequently, a translation committee was created. Permission was granted by the National Council of Churches to use the 1971 edition of the Revised Standard Version as the English textual basis for the ESV.

We have a number of ministries that are designed to help the community as well as the church body. For example, each week we give away food to hundreds of residents in the community. Our food and clothing program is unique because we do not ration the food or clothing. People are free to take as much as they wish. The lines are often long, but the people wait patiently because they know that their needs will be fulfilled.

In order to appropriately carry out our mission and vision beliefs, we as a church body have decided to model our church after the paradigm of the prophetic church. My experience and study at New York Theological Seminary has influenced me to lead my church to engage in the teachings and aspiration promoted by prophetic ministry theorists. It is this paradigm that influenced me to engage in the project set forth in this paper. In the end, I anticipate that the youth of our church and community will be the beneficiaries of the project.

Our congregation is a church that has a composition of all age-level individuals. There are numerous individuals whose names are on the church roster, but a substantial number of them do not attend Sunday School nor church service. Typically, Sunday School classes are not well-attended. That is, on a given Sunday, there is a dearth of attendance by church members relative to Sunday School classes. Over the past few years, we noticed that this trend has continued even though we tried to address the problem from the pulpit, home visits, telephone calls, mailings, emails, etc. Despite our efforts, the problem persists.

The congregation is located in the Bushwick Community of Brooklyn, NY. It is a community located in the northern section of New York City borough of Brooklyn. It is part of Brooklyn Community Board 4, and it is served by the New York City Police

Department 83rd Precinct.² It is represented in New York City Council as part of Districts 34 and 37.³ Bushwick's population in 2007 was 129,980. Roughly, 38.9% of that population was foreign born.⁴ Most of the residents in this community are Latinos from the Caribbean island of Puerto Rico and from the Dominican Republic. However, in more recent years it has been observed that there has been an increase in native-born Americans. In addition, there are other Latino groups that have settled into the area - particularly immigrants from Mexico.⁵

The most recent survey (2008) indicates that the neighborhood's median household income was \$28,802. Just over 30% of the population falls under the poverty line. This makes Bushwick the 7th most impoverished neighborhood in New York City. That is, over 75% of children and youth in the neighborhood are living in poverty.⁶ Only 40.3% of students in Bushwick read at grade level, making it the 49th most literate neighborhood in the city in 2007. 58.2% of students do math at grade level in Bushwick, 41st in the city. In 2007, Bushwick averaged with 25 felonies per 1000 persons, the 25th, out of 55, most felonious community district in the city.

There is a need to address the literacy problem of the above described population. As such, there is an educational infrastructure of thirty-three public and private, primary

² NYPD 83rd Precinct, <http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/html/home/precincts.shtml>, (accessed August 12, 2012).

³ NYC Brooklyn City Council Members District 37, <http://council.nyc.gov/html/members/brooklyn.shtml>, (accessed August 3, 2013).

⁴ State of the City's Housing & Neighborhoods, Bushwick Brooklyn. Furman Center for Real Estate & Urban Policy 2008, http://furmancenter.org/files/sotc/SOC2008_Brooklyn.pdf. (accessed July 27, 2012).

⁵ About Bushwick, http://familypedia.wikia.com/wiki/Bushwick,_Brooklyn (accessed February 18, 2013).

⁶ Ibid.

and secondary schools that serve the Bushwick community. The educational infrastructure includes public elementary schools, one charter school, four parochial schools, seven high schools, and one secondary school.⁷

Slightly over 40% of students in the Bushwick Community read at grade-level. This makes it the 49th most literate neighborhood in the city. About 58% of students are at grade level with math, which places it at the 41st position in the city.⁸ Just a few years ago, the community averaged 25 felonies per 1,000 residents. It was 25th out of 55 with the most felonies in a community in the city.⁹ An interesting fact about the community is that Bushwick is the largest hub of Brooklyn's Hispanic-American community.

Similar to other New York City neighborhoods, Bushwick's Hispanic population is basically Puerto Rican and Dominican; it also has a sizable South American population. As nearly 80% of Bushwick's population is Hispanic, residents have created many businesses to support their various national and distinct traditions in food and other items. The community's profile when compared to other communities in Brooklyn¹⁰ is quite different - our community is heavily populated with a Latino population (see

⁷ NYC Department of City Planning CD4 Profile <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/lucds/bk4profile.pdf>, (accessed July 10, 2012).

⁸ State of the City's Housing & Neighborhoods, Bushwick Brooklyn, Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy, 2008, http://furmancenter.org/files/sotc/SOC2008_Brooklyn.pdf, (accessed July 27, 2012).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Bushwick neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York. <http://www.city-data.com/neighborhood/data.com/neighborhood/Bushwick-Brooklyn-NY.html>, (accessed July 23, 2012).

Appendix I). Our church is located in a community that is roughly 75% Latino, 21% African-American, and about 4% of other populations (Asians and whites). ¹¹

¹¹ Ibid.

CHAPTER 2 **PRIMINARY ANALYSIS OF CHALLENGE**

Challenge Statement

I serve as the Pastor of the Bushwick family Ministry, a ministry of the Church of God of prophecy, in Brooklyn, N.Y. Ninety-five % of the congregation comes from outside the community and church membership has decreased dramatically over the past five (5) years because of relocation and aging. This has caused the church leadership to restructure its worship options. This demonstration project will create a “Church on Demand” technology model that will engage the membership of this community to participate in the regular worship service.

For some time, our church board and church at large noticed that a disproportionate number of our members do not attend church on a regular basis. Recently, we conducted a survey with those who attend church sporadically. We gathered reasons offered as to why they do not attend church. One argument proposed was that they are much busier than they were ten years ago. Youth say that social media like Facebook has greatly influenced them not to attend. We examined the virtues of the argument and concluded that it was not a substantial reason for poor attendance at our church. We said that since every human being has 24 hours a day to plan what he/she wants to do, that reason is insufficient to support the reason our members are not attending church.

Some members say that church service is too long and it is boring. We acknowledged that we live in a society that is characterized by gimmicks and things that entertain. Apparently, some people are engaged in activities that are complex and intense. They want relief from such circumstances and entertainment is a feature in our culture

that satisfies their immediate need. Technology has heightened an insatiable desire of some to be entertained. Unfortunately for them, church service is designed to be a reflective environment rather than an entertaining one. The problem is exasperated because of the generational divide that exists among the various generations.

Youth at our church say they want to respect the traditions and beliefs of the older members of the church, while at the same time they want the older members to respect their (youth) values and ways of thinking. However, no longer do youth accept at face-value the admonitions given by church leaders and other adults in the congregation.

Our youth say they'd rather engage in texting, MySpace, or Facebook so that they will not have to worry about getting up and come to church. They reason, "why would we want to get out of bed, get dressed, come sit through a sermon that is many times not relevant to us?" They contend that it is easier to just "hang out" with friends when all their friends are as close as their computer, cell phone or some other device.

The project I propose requires a shift in the traditional way of thinking. The shift in thinking will impact the senior members more than the youth. For example, seniors in my church normally measure commitment to Christ and one's spirituality based on the rate of church attendance by an individual. A significant part of my proposal accommodates the perceived needs of youth and adults by providing them spiritual support without attending church service. I propose to provide a "church on demand" experience for all who do not attend church. The idea is to reach church members where they are and try to help them get to the point when they will carry out the admonition of Paul: "...not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but

encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.” Hebrews

10:25

Our church has invested in sufficient resources that will allow the project to go forth. A survey of our youth indicates that 97% of them are technologically proficient; nearly half of the adults are. That is, they represent that they have sufficient skills that will allow them to navigate through various forms of technologies. Within our congregation, we have a number of youth and adults who have computer and informational technology degrees. They have indicated that they are willing to help those who may need to hone their skills. Thus, my project will address the needs of our youth who do not wish to attend church in the traditional manner.

CHAPTER 3 **PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION**

Goals and Strategies

Goal 1: Heighten the awareness of the Bushwick Church Family Mission regarding attendance for divine worship service.

Strategies:

Strategy 1: Create questionnaire that addresses church attendance (facilitated by pastor; done by 01/31/13)

Strategy 2: Promote “church on demand” using the church bulletin, church announcements, church newsletter, etc.

Strategy 3: Develop a “church on demand” pamphlet

Strategy 4: Series of sermons (facilitated by pastor; completed 02/17/13)

Strategy 5: Bible study series (facilitated by associate pastor; completed by 02/20/13)

Strategy 6: Focus group (facilitated by pastor and Site Team Leader; completed by 02/02/13)

Strategy 7: Create a “church on demand” website

Evaluation:

- Ensure that there is attendance of 75% of those who sign up for focus group. Attendance will be recorded.
- Have ongoing reflections and discussions regarding sermons and Bible study series. During reflections and discussions, responses and statements will be recorded on large chart paper as individuals “share out.” In addition, an evaluation form will be given to participants for them to complete.

Goal 2

Develop a team by recruiting and training church leaders to be active participants.

Strategies:

Strategy 1: Determine criteria for team membership and determine number of team members (pastor and Site Team – by January 15, 2013)

Strategy 2: Select team members and provide them with orientation (Pastor and Site Team – by 01/31/13)

Strategy 3: Develop action research plan with team members (by 02/28/13)

Strategy 4: Train church leaders regarding the new model for ministry.

Strategy 5: Train the church at-large regarding the new model for ministry

Evaluation:

- It will be proposed that a method to determine whether a measure passes will be done through consensus. If a simple majority of the groups agree to the proposal, then all subsequent plans and actions will be done through the consensus method of approval. Thus, the criteria and number of team members reached through consensus (strategy 1).
- For strategies 2, 3, 4, and five, I will use a three-point evaluation system. The three points will be as follows: the participants' satisfaction level, the participants' learning, and the participants' projected application of learning. Participants will be asked to rate the aforementioned based on four points of criteria:

Content- The relevance, coherence, clarity, value, difficulty, and importance of the topic presented.

Process- The quality of the instruction, activities, participants' engagement, and quality of the facilitator's presentation will be evaluated.

Context- Was the setting appropriate and were the facilities accommodating?

Awareness- Participants will be asked to what extent they were aware of the purpose and goals of the activity they participated.

At the end of each session, paper and pencil questionnaires will be given to participants to complete. Also, there will be opportunities for verbal and written reflections (verbal ones will be charted).

- Attendance of 75% of team members at orientation. Attendance will be recorded.

- Participation of 75% of team members with action research. Attendance will be recorded.

Goal 3: Develop a new model for ministry.

Strategies:

Strategy 1: Produce a manual that describes the project from beginning to end.

Strategy 2: Celebrate the new model for ministry (completed by pastor, team members, and select Site Team members; all 3 strategies to be completed by May 15, 2013)

Strategy 3: “Church on demand” team is established.

Evaluation:

- Complete outline for manual. It will be reviewed by SiteTeam members and revised/edited per the team’s input.
- Church members will be trained on the appropriate use of the manual. At the end of the training, each successful participant will receive a certificate of completion. Success is defined as mastering at least 75% of the material in the manual. At the end of each training session, an assessment will be given to each participant.
- After church members are trained, the church will place on its calendar a day of celebration. At the celebration, individuals will be presented their certificates of completion.
- “Church on demand” team will be composed of volunteers who complete the training listed under goal two.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research Question One (Theological): What is the Biblical understanding of the assembling of the people of God?

Throughout the First Testament, there is an indication that humans engaged in worship experiences together. God laid down specific expectations of those who worshipped Him. Moses and other religious leaders related to the people God's expectations regarding the assembling of the people. The trend was continued in the Second Testament as well.

- A. What is the First Testament perspective regarding assembling of the people of God?
- B. What is the gospels' perspective regarding assembling of the people of God?
- C. What is the Second Testament perspective regarding assembling of the people of God?

Research Question Two (Cultural): What role, if any, does culture play in the spiritual development of a Christian?

The values, patterned ways of thinking, beliefs, actions and feeling are learned by an individual and are subsequently transmitted to others. Youth culture embodies norms and values shared by other members of the adolescent society. There are subcultures within the adolescent society that are in a constant state of flux.

A. Were there cultural influences that First Testament prophets and leaders had to address?

B. Were there cultural influences that Jesus had to address?

C. Were there cultural influences that Second Testament leaders had to address?

Research Question Three: (Ecclesiological) Can I develop a new community of believers who worship God in non-traditional ways?

Our church's position regarding mission is a function of the practical theology department of our denomination. A question that must be addressed is whether there is a mission within the confines of the local church. How does the church benefit from a "worship on demand" ministry?

A. Does the First Testament provide a model of theory for non-traditional worship?

B. Did Jesus model or teach non-traditional ways to worship God?

C. Does the Second Testament provide a model or theory for non-traditional worship?

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION

In order to determine the effectiveness of the project, I will employ three methods of evaluation. These methods will be used because of their abilities to assess what we want them to. They also have the capacity to provide in-depth information that may be volunteered.

METHOD 1 – ONGOING FOCUS GROUP

A focus group will allow me to understand and help prioritize the “felt-needs” of church members. It is a type of case study. That is, it is an informal qualitative assessment that has the ability to capture the breadth and depth of the thinking of our church members without using quantification approaches. The nature of a focus group allows me to respond and make changes immediately and in effective ways.

Another reason I will use a focus group is based on the belief that a “grassroots” participatory process will accommodate my desire to deeply understand congregants’ preferences that will result in more meaningful and broader results. I view the results of a focus group as a single voice speaking on behalf of the church at large. Equally important, a focus group honors participants’ time commitments, it is less labor intensive, more cost effective, and can be easily organized in a short time-frame.

The focus group will have a recorder present; the recorder will use a flip charts.

At the outset, it will be established that the recorder will not be allowed to be involved in the facilitation. Video and audio recordings were considered. However, they will not be used because they tend to project the notion of intrusion. The use of audio and visual technology adds to the levels of discomfort and distress among participants; electronic recording devices can inhibit a free exchange of dialogue. Facial expressions, body language, type of dress, and participant identity will not be integral components to the focus group.

METHOD 2 – SITE TEAM EVALUATION

The Site Team will use an evaluation process based on the principles referred to as S.M.A.R.T goals. The group will establish a predetermined expected outcome and it will evaluate the success of the program based on the specific expectations. The acronym S.M.A.R.T means the following: **S**- Specific; **M** – Measurable; **A**- Attainable; **R**- Realistic; and **T**-Timely

The Goal must Be Specific: The site team will evaluate whether the project is specific. In order to ensure specificity, the site team will seek to have six “W” questions answered:

Who: Who is involved in the project?

What: What do we want to accomplish?

Where: Where is the project to take place?

When: When is the project to start and when will it end?

Which: Which population will be the focus in the project?

Why: Why is this project being done?

The Goal must Be Measurable: The site team will establish concrete criteria so that progress can be measured. For this project, the response to surveys, focus groups, and data from technology usage will be used as tools for measurement. Three key questions will be used as a way to evaluate the project:

How much time is spent in viewing the program (worship on demand)?

- How many church members watch the program (worship on demand)?
- What is considered as “success”?

The Goal must Be Attainable: Site Team members will ask questions such as:

- Are the goals and outcomes possible?
- Does the church have the resources to reach the expected outcomes?
- Is there a plan for individuals to grow and mature so that the outcomes can be reached?

The Goal must Be Realistic: The site team will determine whether the expected outcomes were ones that a young person in our modern society can be expected to reach. That is, is the expected outcome too high? Or conversely, is the expected outcome too low? Will the expected outcomes cause the youth to be viewed as “out of touch”? Is the expected outcomes within the perimeter of the culture and society they live from day-to-day?

The Goal must Be Timely: Site team members will determine whether the project was done within an expected time-frame. That is, are the expected outcomes to occur within days, weeks, months, or years? A commitment to a deadline will help the site team focus its efforts on completing expected outcomes on or before a set date. This part of the S.M.A.R.T. criteria is designed to prevent expected outcomes from being negatively

impacted by the day-to-day crises that often occurs with projects of this nature. In addition, timeliness helps create a sense of urgency. Participants and evaluators will be able to move forward with the thought that there is an end in sight.

METHOD 3 – TRIANGULATION OF DATA

Triangulation is a process of using three points of data that may indicate similarities. It can also show differences that need to be discussed. When the data is synthesized, it allows individuals to make decisions regarding outcomes and whether something may need to be changed. When a single evaluation source is used, it may not consider factors that could affect the outcome. That is, when an evaluation is done based on a single piece of data, it is subject to environmental or motivational influences which can affect its accuracy.

Triangulation of data will be used because it has the ability to make use of pre-existing data sources. This helps individuals to have rapid comprehension of the situation. When information is gathered by different methods and people, the findings tend to corroborate each other and thereby reduce the probability of bias and random error. An outstanding feature of triangulating data is that it accommodates the combination of data gathered from qualitative and quantitative data.

The data that will be used in this project will come from three sources. Namely, the data will come from the focus group; the site team; and from the church at large (survey). It is expected that data from the three sources will fundamentally reach similar concerns and conclusions. However, if they do not, it will lead me to analyze the reasons why they do not match. In the end, it will increase the validity of the project.

CHAPTER 6 **MINISTERIAL COMPETENCIES**

The SiteTeam considered the notion that not all pastors are equally capable in all areas of ministry. However, the SiteTeam determined that there should be some minimum competencies if a minister is to remain as a pastor or if a pastor seeks higher educational credentials; namely, the Doctor of Ministry Degree. As such, the team agreed that it was important appropriately assess an individual's ability to lead a congregation, adequately shepherd a flock, keep the flock together, care for the needs of the congregation, help it grow, and be involved in the local community.

The SiteTeam Leader informed me that they considered a number of things as they tried to determine my level of competency. First, they considered what John Wesley explained two centuries ago as he addressed ministerial competency. He promoted the idea that there were three questions that should be used as a starting point: (1) Does the minister know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior? (2) Does the minister possess gifts for ministry? (3) Has the minister shown fruit in his/her ministry? I was informed that these questions served as a basis for assessing my ministerial competency.

According to the SiteTeam Leader, the first question subsequently led the group to inquire about my relationship with Jesus. They asked whether I demonstrated love, faith, peace, and joy. Do I demonstrate that I know Jesus personally? If I appear to "know" Jesus, what is the depth of that relationship? That is, is it one of total

commitment; is my “walk” with Him consistent? They discussed the above questions in a reflective and honest manner.

The second question involved my natural and cultivated gifts or abilities to minister. They wanted to determine whether I have the ability to discern theological error? How well do I know the Bible? How well do I communicate the basic tenets of the gospel? The SiteTeam analyzed my sermons and my ability as a counselor. They discussed my skills in leadership, interpersonal relationships, outreach, etc.

After the group duly examined the above two questions, they determined that they needed to examine my record. They wanted to know what had I done in ministry. Do I have tangible results? The SiteTeam believed that a competent minister needs to have a record that unquestionably demonstrates fruit from his/her labor. Fortunately, the SiteTeam determined that I could demonstrate an abundance of fruit from the labor I engaged in at my church. Since the above three questions outcomes were satisfactorily addressed, the group decided that they would examine specific competencies relative to my work as a minister.

Competence Assessment

The SiteTeam Leader informed me that on one occasion that the group met, they struggled with the notion of what constitutes competency for a minister? That is, how can it be authentically assessed? One person on the team is a human resource person. She suggested that a working definition should foster the idea that competency occurs when a person fulfills one’s job description. Someone asked, “Which job description?” Is it the one culled by the leaders of our denomination? Is it a job description developed by the minister? Is it a job description created by the local church? If the congregation creates a

job description, is it based on the Bible or the desires of the congregants? For example, suppose the church says that my job description is as follows: "Fulfill you pastoral duties; love us and care for us. Make regular and frequent visitations. Be with church members during various crises. Let each sermon be interesting and let it not offend parishioners. Represent the church in worthily ways to the community. Provide the congregation with regular assurances that it is right where it should be. Administer the sacraments faithfully and create programs that will keep the youth off the streets and keep them in the church. The minister must manage the church so that others will want to attend various services and the youth are to remain interested in spiritual things."

In the end, members of the SiteTeam decided to evaluate competency based on the Bible. This was an important decision because they discussed the idea that we live in the rational and scientific age of the twenty first century. The age we live has had an impact pastoral theology. That is, the social sciences have greatly influenced the role of the minister. The pastor has become a counselor, social worker, psychologist, manager, youth director, administrator, recreation director, financial expert, leader, community advocate, etc. Liberal, humanistic, naturalistic presuppositions robbed the ministry of its supernatural aspects.

The SiteTeam employed the biblical job description for ministers that is found in Ephesians 4. This model focuses on the tasks of equipping congregants for ministry, preaching, prayer, and provide spiritual direction. The team concluded that ministers who perform this job description are competent. They decided that if they were going to be biblical in their assessment of competence, they needed to begin with a biblical job description rather than one borrowed from the business world. The team decided that it

was best not to fabricate a job description based on their desires, traditions, belief systems, or their upbringing. Finally, the SiteTeam concluded that ultimately, the only question that really matters is whether a minister is doing the will of God - not whether a minister is trying to please the denominational leaders, the congregation or the community. This is the context that SiteTeam members evaluated my competency.

Communicator

We perceive Bishop McPherson to be an effective communicator. We have observed that he is able communicate effectively within and outside the church. He is able to employ a variety of tools and styles so that people are inspired and informed. He uses a variety of means to communicate. For example, Bishop McPherson uses technology, focus groups, small group discussions, the pulpit, telephone, emails, etc in order to keep congregants informed and inspired. His ability to engage in discussions without dominating them allows him to be viewed as an effective communicator.

Bishop McPherson is able to select the appropriate mode of communication in order to reach his targeted audience. That is, he does not use the same mode of communication to get a message across to young adults and senior citizens. As a result, all populations feel as though he is speaking to them directly.

Biblical Knowledge

It is important that a church leader be able to expound upon the scriptures appropriately. In order for this to happen, the minister must be rooted and grounded in scriptural knowledge. The leader must be able to use the scriptures in ways that maintains integrity to the original intent, while at the same time make the scriptures relevant. Our denomination accepts both testaments as the inspired word of God. We observed that

Bishop McPherson has a rich knowledge of both. Whether he preaches from the Old or New Testament, he causes the Bible to be viewed in light of the gospel and he interprets scripture with a contemporary flavor.

Bishop McPherson is able to identify the experience and culture of the biblical writer and compare and contrast it to the listener's/reader's experience and culture. He emphasizes that this is important when interpreting the Bible. In addition, his biblical knowledge allows him to provide listener's/reader's information regarding the economic, socio-political, and historical contexts of a given passage of scripture. His use of Greek and Hebrew informs us that he analyzes scripture using current research and scholarly methods. His library is filled with critical commentaries, sermon helps, word study books, and other scholarly resources. These help him acquire biblical knowledge and make practical application of what he learned.

Church Administration and Planning

Bishop McPherson has demonstrated an unusual ability to practice acceptable principles of good administration and planning. He is able to plan for and implement short and long-range goals designed to enhance congregational life. He plans with appropriate bodies within the church.

He has an authentic leadership style and he has shared that style with church leaders and the congregation at large. He is consistent with how all church ministries need to operate. For example, there are three fundamental things he looks for from each ministry. Namely: (1) What is the purpose/focus of the ministry? That is, what are the clear and definable goals? (2) What is needed for the success of the ministry? What are the resources? What resources are needed? What strategies will be used to obtain the

ministry's goals? What is the schedule and timeframe? Does the ministry align with the church's overall goals? (3) What evaluation plan is in place? How often will the evaluation occur? Are there varieties of evaluation methods? Who will do the evaluation? Will authentic feedback be provided?

As Bishop McPherson strives for unity and consistency, he insists that all ministries follow the practices, policies, and procedures established by the church. Emphasis is placed on the notion that each ministry must demonstrate an understanding of church policies regarding confidentiality and privacy issues. There must be an accounting system that accommodates acceptable record-keeping practices. That is, records must be maintained as required by church policy and secular entities.

Bishop McPherson strongly believes in planning. As such, we have one, two, three, four, and five year plans for the church. Periodically, all plans are reviewed and adjusted accordingly. He believes that it is important to plan so that the church can measure how it is doing in relationship to the great commission.

When we plan at our church, sometimes Bishop McPherson takes select individuals on a retreat. While at the retreat, we are able to seek God's guidance and plan accordingly. Other learning activities occur at the church with church leaders. Planning groups normally are comprised of individuals that reflect the composition of the church. Often, Bishop McPherson asks that the format for planning be one based on group "consensus." This approach seems to keep the group unified.

Pastoral Care

Pastoral care is an important competency that we discussed. We feel that it is important because competency or lack of competency will cause the congregation to

carry out the great commission, or it potentially will be a cause for its downfall. As such, pastoral care, we believe, is fundamental to the call of a pastor. We believe that it is important that a pastor be able to engage congregants with tenets of sympathy and empathy. Bishop McPherson has demonstrated that he possesses the compassion of Christ. In the context of pastoral care, he is sensitive to one's context, culture, background, and present situation; he is able to convey hope to the marginalized and despondent.

Bishop McPherson apparently possesses self-knowledge which allows him to provide support within the context of his strengths and limitations. He is ever-aware of the resources available to help others improve their situations. When resources are limited or unavailable, he reaches out to entities outside the confines of the church. He has demonstrated that he understands the balance between pastoral authority and its relationship to pastoral care.

We have observed that Bishop McPherson pastoral care is sensitive to and respectful of diversity and differences. These include ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, age, education, disability, cultural heritage, religious beliefs, and reputation. We have noticed that Bishop McPherson provides effective pastoral care to those who are experiencing grief and loss. His work with Hospice individuals helps to authenticate competency in the area of pastoral care.

Bishop McPherson demonstrates competency in this area because he employs the disciplines of psychology, sociology, human development, and spiritual growth. He is able to articulate theological and biblical foundations for pastoral care. He uses the above to help individuals engage in introspection (when appropriate) and help them clarify their

issues while using verbal and non-verbal modes of communication. When appropriate and necessary, Bishop McPherson makes referrals so that the individual can receive the best support available. This supports feelings of trust and confidentiality church members have towards him.

Worship and Preaching

Bishop McPherson is quite capable of proclaiming the word of God and helps the congregation apply the word of God to their daily lives. It is evident that he knows and understands the theory and practice of Christian preaching. His sermons help the members of the church recognize and respond to the presence of God in the worship experience. Bishop McPherson uses multiple homiletic styles and approaches in order to appropriately various preaching situations. When preaching, he is able to present a warm and engaging pulpit presence. It is apparent that he is aware of the impact of words, phrases, and idioms so that they are not offensive to his listeners.

Bishop McPherson is adept at preparing sermons that are practical, exegetically sound, and purposeful. His sermons reflect the fundamental beliefs espoused by the Church of God of Prophecy. Bishop McPherson's sermons are flavored with considerations of his audience. That is, he considers their age, culture, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, etc.

Relative to worship, Bishop McPherson has articulated biblical and theological basis for Christian worship. For example our worship services demonstrate an order for worship that connects both contextual and theological sources. As such, he has affirmed his skills and ability to lead a meaningful worship service. Bishop McPherson significantly makes contributions to the variety and choice of music used during the

worship service. He has established a committee to evaluate effectiveness of music during the worship experience.

Bishop McPherson continues to demonstrate an awareness of the space, seating, lighting, sound, and other spatial considerations for worship. To him, each worship service is not the same. Therefore, he demonstrates appropriate ways to adapt worship space for a given service. In order to accomplish the above, Bishop McPherson collaborates effectively with individuals responsible for preparing the sound, music, lighting, technology, and the setting. In fact, before an individual uses the microphone to speak, he ensures that the preacher is allowed an opportunity to become familiar with the sound system that affects the delivery of the sermon.

We admire the manner in which Bishop McPherson speaks with clarity and appropriate timing. His leadership with public prayer is extemporaneous and the congregation responds with fervor and enthusiasm. Thus, Bishop McPherson has the ability to plan and lead exciting and meaningful worship. He does the above by working with the worship team, musicians, and congregational members. He understands that the church's worship hour can have a significant impact on Christian discipleship.

Leadership

Our denomination demands that church pasto0rs and denominational leaders demonstrate high levels of proficiency as leaders. One characteristic that Bishop McPherson has demonstrated as a leader is his unconditional love for his people. Despite the notion that it is a “thankless” job and that members can be profoundly unreasonable, he nevertheless shows love to everyone. We are aware that it is sometimes difficult to love those who complain and spread falsehoods about an individual. He continues to be

steadfast with his pursuit to model love after the manner of Jesus. That is, Bishop McPherson expresses an intense love for the members of his congregation; he loves as Christ has loved us.

Bishop McPherson is a persistent leader. He has a long-term perspective of various ministries and he is able to lead toward progress one incremental step at a time. As a leader, he desires for the church to be healthy and thriving well beyond the time he is pastor. He has a vision that extends beyond today or even the next few years. Bishop McPherson paves the way and he leads by example. During the church's darkest hours, he forges ahead and church members follow him. During such times, the church becomes equipped to meet greater challenges ahead. That is, as a leader, Bishop McPherson equips congregants with appropriate training and resources.

Bishop McPherson promotes teamwork and conveys a sense of urgency to complete the church's mission. He has demonstrated competency in helping others grow in their abilities to serve in various ministries. He takes quality time to address the concerns that others may have. His "people skills" has earned him the trust of the people he serves.

Bishop McPherson leadership style can be characterized as a transformational one. That is, he started with the development of his vision and a determination to lead others about the future with a plan to bring about significant changes. As a transformational leader, his goal is to overtly to transform the organization (church) as a whole. In the process, we have seen followers transformed in thought, attitude, commitment, and service. Thus, members of the church have become products of the transformation. Within the church, Bishop McPherson has developed leaders from within

the church body. Already, individuals have been trained to carry on the activities and vision of the church in his absence. Bishop McPherson has successfully done this in every department of the church.

As our leader, Bishop McPherson has consistently demonstrated an insatiable desire to constantly improve. He shares with church leaders at the end of each year what he plans to do to improve his leadership skills for the next year. This leadership strategy has been contagious at our church. That is, church leaders and those who aspire to become leaders follow his model of improving oneself each year. He helps congregants improve themselves by helping them determine whether their goals are too or whether they are too lofty.

We feel that Bishop McPherson has demonstrated competency as a leader because he believes in the adage: "Practice what you preach." Even the youth at our church comment that he is consist with what he says and what he does. As a result, all populations within the church follow his leadership. It is wonderful to see a leader who has credibility from the members of his church. Thus, when he speaks, people at the church listen and will generally give him the benefit of the doubt when they are unsure about things.

Therefore, we the members of the SiteTeam do agree that the aforementioned competencies are evident in the ministerial practice of Bishop McPherson. We agree that he is competent in all areas listed above. In addition, we want it to be known that we have not taken our responsibility of evaluating his competency lightly. We spent a lot of time trying to be fair to him, while at the same time present a credible profile of how we view his competency in each area listed above.

Competencies for Development

I. Change Agent – To address the problems and skills needed to become an effective change agent.

Strategies:

- A. Increase awareness and understanding of need for change
- B. Create a receptive and supportive environment for change
- C. Establish a team
- D. Create an action plan
 - 1. Clarify/Prioritize the goal
 - 2. Brainstorm ideas with stakeholders
 - 3. Establish objectives
 - 4. Create a timeline
 - 5. Create accountability system
 - 6. Participate in seminars, workshops, webinars, and academic courses
 - 7. Meet with notable community leaders who are effective change agents

Evaluation:

- A. Solicit feedback from the church board and SiteTeam members.
- B. Have discussions with small groups.
- C. Have a summit with the entire church body and solicit feedback.

At the end of each of the above sessions, paper and pencil questionnaires will be given to participants to complete. Also, there will be opportunities for verbal and written reflections (verbal ones will be charted).

II. As a Community Developer. - This competency is applicable to my prophetic role which includes my responsibility for service beyond the gathered congregation (church).

Strategies:

- A. Create an understanding of the principles of community work
 1. Community meetings, newsletters, flyers, letters, bulletin inserts, etc.
- B. Develop community information and relationships
 1. Advance leadership development opportunities
- C. Establish and develop community leadership and networks
 1. Assist individuals/groups with designing/ accessing leadership development pathways
- D. Develop community programs
 1. Identify sources of leadership support – services, resources, people, and programs
- E. Engage in community action and support it
 1. Support individuals/groups with leadership development

Evaluation:

The following questions will be asked in order to evaluate:

- To what degree is there inter- and intra-community cooperation?
- Is there an increase in community dialogue about addressing various problems?
- Is there certifiable collaboration among individuals, institutions and community-based organizations?
- Are new community coalitions established and/or revived?

At the end of each session, paper and pencil questionnaires will be given to participants to complete. Also, there will be opportunities for verbal and written reflections (verbal ones will be charted).

APPENDIX A

September, 2012 Timeline

Week	Project Goal	Activity	Expected Time to Complete	Participant (s)	Who is Responsible?
1	Organize SiteTeam	Meet with SiteTeam	One session	SiteTeam members	SiteTeam leader
2	Synthesize collected data	Analyze data; reflect	Three sessions	Select SiteTeam members	SiteTeam leader
3	Create action plan	Present and discuss models for action	Two sessions	Select SiteTeam members	SiteTeam leader
4	Publish data	Determine format for data presentation; determine content of published data	Two sessions	Select SiteTeam members	SiteTeam leader

October, 2012 Timeline

Week	Project Goal	Activity	Expected Time to Complete	Participant (s)	Who is Responsible?
1	Inform church leadership	Discuss and review data	One session	Church board	Pastor
2	Inform corporate church	Discuss and review data	One session	Church in business session	Pastor
3	Submit proposal	Organize material for proposal	Ongoing	Pastor	Pastor
4	Obtain proposal approval	Revise and edit proposal	Ongoing	Pastor	Pastor

November, 2012 Timeline

Week	Project Goal	Activity	Expected Time to Complete	Participant (s)	Who is Responsible?
1	Inform SiteTeam	Discuss, review and update SiteTeam	One session	SiteTeam members	SiteTeam leader
2	Validate/invalidate research question 1	Conduct literature review	Entire week	Pastor	Pastor
3	Validate/invalidate research question 2	Conduct literature review	Entire week	Pastor	Pastor
4	Validate/invalidate research question 3	Conduct literature review	Entire week	Pastor	Pastor

December, 2012 Timeline

Week	Project Goal	Activity	Expected Time to Complete	Participant (s)	Who is Responsible?
1	Inform regarding project cost	Present financial data for project cost	One session	SiteTeam	SiteTeam Leader
2	Inform regarding project cost	Present financial data for project cost	One session	Church board	Pastor
3	Inform regarding project cost	Present financial data for project cost	One session	Church in business session	Pastor
4	Christmas activities	Christmas activities	Christmas activities	Christmas activities	Christmas activities

January, 2013 Timeline

Week	Project Goal	Activity	Expected Time to Complete	Participant (s)	Who is Responsible?
1	Software availability	Develop software product	Ongoing	Technology team	Director technology team
2	Software availability	Develop software product	Ongoing	Technology team	Director technology team
3	Software availability	Develop software product	Ongoing	Technology team	Director technology team
4	Software availability	Develop software product	Ongoing	Technology team	Director technology team

February, 2013 Timeline

Week	Project Goal	Activity	Expected Time to Complete	Participant (s)	Who is Responsible?
1	Heighten awareness (Goal 1)	Engage in a series of workshops and Sunday School classes	Ongoing	Corporate church	Pastor
2	Gather information (Goal 2)	Conduct qualitative research focus group	Ongoing	Corporate church	Pastor
3	Create pamphlet (Goal 3)	Create “Church on Demand” pamphlet	Ongoing	SiteTeam and Technology team	Director technology team and SiteTeam leader
4	Create pamphlet (Goal 3)	Create “Church on Demand” pamphlet	Ongoing	Technology team	Director technology team and SiteTeam leader

March, 2013 Timeline

Week	Project Goal	Activity	Expected Time to Complete	Participant (s)	Who is Responsible?
1	Implement project	Activate website (Worship on Demand)	First week	Corporate church	Pastor
2	Monitor project	Monitor activity and adjust accordingly	Ongoing	Corporate church	Director technology team
3	Monitor project	Monitor activity and adjust accordingly	Ongoing	Corporate church	Director technology team
4	Monitor project	Monitor activity and adjust accordingly	Ongoing	Corporate church	Director technology team

April, 2013 Timeline

Week	Project Goal	Activity	Expected Time to Complete	Participant (s)	Who is Responsible?
1	Collect data	Engage focus group, workshop, and Sunday School classes	Two sessions	Corporate church	Pastor
2	Collect data	Engage focus group, workshop, and Sunday School classes	Two sessions	Corporate church	Pastor
3	Review data	Analyze and interpret data	Two sessions	SiteTeam	SiteTeam leader
4	Review data	Analyze and interpret data	Two sessions	SiteTeam	SiteTeam leader

May, 2013 Timeline

Week	Project Goal	Activity	Expected Time to Complete	Participant (s)	Who is Responsible?
1	Competency evaluation	Determine my competency (church membership, church board, and SiteTeam	Ongoing	Pastor	Pastor
2	Competency evaluation	Determine my competency (church membership, church board, and SiteTeam	Ongoing	Pastor	Pastor
3	Competency evaluation	Determine my competency (church membership, church board, and SiteTeam	Ongoing	Pastor	Pastor
4	Competency evaluation	Determine my competency (church membership, church board, and SiteTeam	Ongoing	Pastor	Pastor

June, 2013 Timeline

Week	Project Goal	Activity	Expected Time to Complete	Participant (s)	Who is Responsible?
1	Evaluate project	Planning session	One session	SiteTeam, Technology team, and church board	Pastor
2	Evaluate project	Evaluate project based on results from focus groups	Ongoing	SiteTeam, Technology team, and church board	SiteTeam leader
3	Evaluate project	Evaluate project based on input from SiteTeam	Ongoing	SiteTeam	SiteTeam leader
4	Evaluate project	Evaluate project based on triangulation of data	Ongoing	SiteTeam	SiteTeam leader

APPENDIX B

BUDGET

Date	Task/ Activity	Tools to Complete Job	Person Resp.	Budget/ Cost	Funding
11/00/12	License Trade Mark		IT Tech.	2500	Basil
11/00/12	Domain Names	Go Daddy .Com	Site Team Member	255	Basil
12/1/2012	Proposal Approval				
12/22/2012	Meet with Site Team	Kings Diner/ Restaurant	Basil/ Brunch	125	Basil
1/14/2013	Meet With Advisor	Copy Of Approved Proposal	Basil	40	Basil
2/00/13	Goal-1 Strategy :1	Church Fellowship Hall	Site Team Member	75	Basil
2/00/13	Goal -1 Strategy:2&3	Church Fellowship Hall	Site Team Member	50	Basil
03/00/13	Goal-2 Strategy - 1&2	Restaurant Breakfast	Site Team Member	90	Basil
03/00/13	Goal-2 Strategy: 3	Church Fellowship Hall	Basil	250	Basil
04/00/13	Goal-3	Worship on Demand Flyer	Site Team Member	250	Basil
04/00/13	Meet With Advisor	Copy of Flyer	Basil	40	Basil
05/00/13	Goal -3 Strategy :1	Church –Morning Worship Service	Site Team Member		Basil
05/00/13	Goal-3 Strategy:2	Church Fellowship Hall	Basil	25	Basil
05/00/13- 11/00/13	Writing and Research	All Paperwork etc. hand over to Editor	Basil	2000	Basil
\$ 5,700					

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APPENDIX B
ANNOTATED WORSHIP RESOURCES

ANNOTATED WORSHIP RESOURCES

Participating in Worship

Craig Douglas Erickson, Westminster! John Knox, Louisville, Kentucky, 1989, 223 pages.

General and Scripture index. Each chapter of the book promotes a study guide and a bibliography that is rather lengthy. The subtitle, "History, Theory, and Practice," provides a summary of its contents. Erickson emphasizes practice and involving the entire congregation in worship. He remarkably covers all areas of worship including silence and gestures. The author provides numerous ideas and resources that should help make worship deep, meaningful, and highly participatory.

Up With Worship

Anne Ortlund, Regal Books, Ventura, California, 1982, 120 pages

This well-reasoned, clever and readable book tells how to get totally involved in church worship. It presents practical steps.

Introduction to Christian Worship

James F. White, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1980, 288 pages.

This document on Christian worship is written by a foremost Protestant worship scholar. The book is academic; it has a strong pastoral thrust. White places emphasis on the historical, theological, and pastoral dimensions of worship.

Liturgies of the Western Church

Bard Thompson, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1980, 448 pages.

This is a collection of 13 liturgies (plus variations) that includes many complete worship services. Thompson gives historical and contextual introductions that cover Western Christianity from Justin Martyr to John Wesley.

Worship Old and New

Robert E. Webber, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1982, 256 pages.

The fundamental thrust of this book is to examine the biblical roots, historical development, and theological meaning of the worship experience. Secondly, its purpose is to seek ways in which the old practices can be applied within the context of modern worship. It is quite well-written and oriented for evangelicals. It contains a lot of good materials for a new or an experienced pastor.

Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition

James F. White, Westminster/John Knox, Louisville, Kentucky, 1989, 288 pages

White is known to be a leading scholar on worship. This book accentuates the differences and strengths of various worship forms practiced by American Protestant churches. The author contrasts Protestant and Roman Catholic worship. The book covers the origin, development, and present traditions of some of the mainline churches: Lutheran, Reformed, Anabaptist, Anglican, Separatist and Puritan, Quaker, Frontier, and Pentecostal.

The Pastor-Evangelist in Worship

Richard Stall Armstrong, Westminster/ John Knox, Louisville, Kentucky, 1986, 216pages, This unique book discusses both preaching and worship in the context of their contribution to evangelism. The author addresses not only the weekly worship service, but also the evangelistic potential of the ordinances and other services of the church.

The Leadership of Worship

Grady Hardin, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1980, 110 pages.

The author says: "A carefully planned service is of primary importance in leading participants to experience Christ in the fullest sense." The book provides a detailed explanation of how to lead a worship service. Hardin includes discussion of spoken words, visible words, the planning team, and the use of color, texture, and time.

Real Worship-It Will Transform Your Life

Warren W. Wiersbe, Oliver-Nelson Books, Nashville, 1990 219 pages.

Much of what Warren Wiersbe writes relates to corporate worship. However, the strength of this book is its personal and devotional value. That is, the book is recommended for its corporate and personal worship value; the reader will benefit in both areas. Wiersbe divides the book into four parts--invitation to worship, worship and wonder, worship and witness, and worship and warfare.

Jubilate!—Church Music in the Evangelical Tradition

Donald P. Hustad, Hope Publishing, Carol Stream, Illinois, 1981, 368 pages

While the subject of this volume is fundamentally about church music, it nevertheless impacts on all of worship. This book is one of the best in the field of evangelical church music. Readers do not need to translate from works written from a liturgical church bias (as many books on church music are) to make it eminently practical.

Full Circle—A Proposal to the Church for an Arts Ministry

Nena Bryans, Schuyler Institute for Worship and the Arts, San Carlos, California, 1988, 81 pages

One statement from page 15 explains the purpose of this book: "The arts can help us take worship out of the routine and expected into a place of wonder and celebration."

Ritual and Pastoral Care

Elaine Ramshaw, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1987, 128 pages.

Ramshaw tells how ritual provides order and meaning. Normative and ethical force to the community creates familiarity, and reaffirms our place in the social order.

The Service of God: Christian Work and Worship

William H. Willimon, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1983, 240 pages.

Worship impacts how members of the congregation choose to live their lives and the decisions he or she makes. The author challenges readers as he discusses the relationship between worship and ethics.

Worship as Pastoral Care

William H. Willimon, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1979, 237 pages.

Discussions take place relative as to how to blend worship and pastoral care in order to enrich and support each other. The author believes that true pastoral care cannot take place apart from an active community of faith. He examines four acts of worship: baptism, the Lord's Supper, the wedding, and the funeral.

Acting Out the Gospels With Mimes, Puppets, and Clowns

William DeAngelis, Twenty-Third Publications, Mystic, Connecticut, 1982, 92 pages

This book includes instructions for 19 plays. It was written mainly for Catholics, it can be easily adapted to any denomination or local church.

Dedication Services for Every Occasion

Man/red Hoick, Jr., compiler, Judson Press, Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, 1984, 96 pages.

This is a handbook that provides 35 services for events as diverse as dedications for the new church kitchen or choir robes. They can be duplicated, adapted, or changed in ways to suit your congregation. This is a very handy and useful handbook.

Dedications and Readings for Church Events

Manfred Hoick, Jr., compiler, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1991, 147 pages.

Hoick presents this book of services for special events; all are entirely new and may be used or adapted as you wish. The material is fresh as well as refreshing.

Fabric Applique for Worship

Rebecca Jerde, Augsburg, Minneapolis, 1983, 80 pages. It has a glossary.

The subtitle is, "Patterns and Guide for Sewing Banners, Vestments, and Paraments." This book should be helpful to worship innovators. Even if you don't use vestments and paraments, you can get ideas for banners and hangings so that the worship service can be enriched.

Writing Your Own Worship Materials

G. Temp Sparkman, Judson Press, Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, 1980, 111 pages. This book possesses a. bibliography and index. This book is filled with examples; it teaches one how to write his/her own calls to worship, invocations, prayers, responsive readings, etc.

Worship

Evelyn Underhill, Crossroads, New York, 1982, 350 pages.

Underhill is known for her focus on the spiritual life. She does not write a handbook. Instead, she delves into those primary realities of our relationship to God that our devotional acts express.

Periodicals

The Hymn: A Journal of Congregational Song, The Hymn Society of America, Fort Worth, Texas. You will be able to read about new hymns, research, and hymn stories.

Modern Liturgy, Resource Publications, San Jose, California. Practical resources for worship planning.

Reformed Liturgy and Music, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Louisville, Kentucky. It provides helpful music and worship suggestions. It is organized according to the Christian year.

Worship, Saint John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota. Journal of the Academy of Worship. It provides scholarly liturgical orientation.

Come and Worship, Tap into God's Power Through Praise and Worship, Michael Coleman and Ed Lindquist, Fleming H. Revell Co., Old Tappan, New Jersey, 1989, 159 pages.

"Over and over again people are telling us they want more teaching on praise and worship." The authors noted the aforementioned statement several years ago. Consequently, they organized Integrity Music. Today more than 175,000 people receive Hosanna! Music Praise and Worship tapes every eight weeks. This is a nondenominational book that shows how to enter God's presence through praise and worship music.

Protest and Praise, Sacred Music of Black Religion, Jon Michael Spencer, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1990, 262 pages.

Protest and Praise is divided into two parts--"Protest Song" and "Praise Song." In Part 1 the author, a musicologist and historian, analyzes sacred Black music and its evolution from inside

slavery looking out (spirituals). He does the same with antislavery hymnody, the social gospel and civil rights songs. Part Two, "Praise Song," also follows history starting with the unique ring-shout dance, the sweet and exotic tongue-song – the focus is mainly on music employed mainly by Holiness-Pentecostal, and gospel music.

Touch Holiness: Resources for Worship, Ruth C. Duck and Maren C. Tirabassi, eds., The Pilgrim Press, New York, 1990, 256 pages.

This collection of writings from more than 60 gifted contributors comes from a variety of liturgical perspectives. This worship book stands out as particularly beautiful and sensitive. It is divided into three sections; it provides readings and prayers for three types of services: the liturgical year; the sacraments and rites of the church; and regular worship services. With occasional modifications, any church can use the material. This book can help add a degree of freshness and a touch of elegance to any worship service.

Mastering Worship, Jack Hayford, Howard Stevenson, John Killinger, Multnomah, Portland, Oregon, 1990, 166 pages.

The fourth volume in Multnomah's Mastering Ministry series, this book provides interesting ideas for enriching the church worship experience. It also provides guidance in incorporating classic and contemporary expressions of worship.

Sing the Psalms, Dale A. Schoening, CSS Publishing, Lima, Ohio, 1989.

This volume can help churches leaders reintroduce the element of song through the use of the Psalms. This volume has metered psalms based on the Common Lectionary. The author provides metrical versions and suggested tunes for many of the psalms.

(Justin, 1 Apology, chap 67)

APPENDIX C
WEBSITE REGISTRATION

WEBSITE REGISTRATION

Church Registration page will contain the following fields:

Name of church
Address of church
Pastor (can that be multiple)
Denomination (drop down)
Phone Number
E-mail address
Website address
Administrator's First Name
Administrator's Last Name
Administrator's preferred username
Administrator's password
Uploaded Photos

Member Registration Page

First name:
Last name:
Date of birth:
Age range (10-year increments):
Your church's name:
If no church, write "None":
Denomination:
Address:
Email address:
Phone number
Username:
Password:
Upload a photo

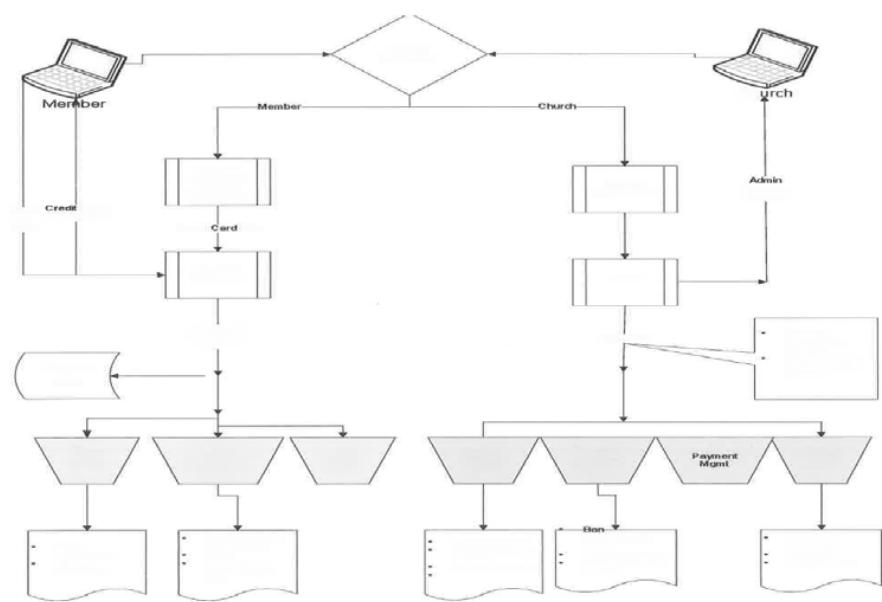
APPENDIX D
ADDITIONAL TECHNICAL WORK

ADDITIONAL TECHNICAL WORK TO BE DONE

- System Analysis
- Technical research to find the right components and integration so that is seamlessness throughout the process.
- Create customized templates that have the capability to be automatically integrated into systems such as tablets and smartphones. Once completed, it must be approved the church's administration.
- Develop the ability to upload videos and make the categories only available to the appropriate church administrators.
- Include a mechanism whereby the church administration can create a group and have individual members join the group within a community setting. For example, individuals who use Twitter or Facebook accounts.
- Arrange for a means to make appropriate announcements created and maintained by the church administrative team.
- Post status on the community group wall - similar to the way that Facebook does.
- Establish a security system that is acceptable to paid members as well as non-paying members.
- Subscription management is a component that must be completed.
- Payment management with a credit card processor.
- Implement an analysis tool that is date specific.
- Establish a notification system that alerts the site administration of new users or payments that have been made.
- Comments to be approved by site admin
- Develop a customer Support System
 - ❖ System support process
 - ❖ On-going support for users
 - ❖ On-going support for groups
- Establish an annual upgrade process
 - ❖ New features review
 - ❖ Features roadmap

APPENDIX E
“WORSHIP-ON-DEMAND” DESIGN

“WORSHIP-ON-DEMAND” DESIGN



APPENDIX F
PASTOR EVALUATION

Please indicate how you feel Bishop McPherson is performing in the following areas. **Please circle the number that expresses your evaluation of Bishop McPherson's performance.**

1. Bishop McPherson is an effective and inspirational pastor

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very poor	Needs Improvement	Fair	Good	Very Good	Don't Know

2. How are Bishop McPherson services?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very poor	Needs Improvement	Fair	Good	Very Good	Don't Know

3. How does Bishop McPherson encourage and support members' spiritual growth?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very poor	Needs Improvement	Fair	Good	Very Good	Don't Know

4. How does Bishop McPherson works with parents, youth and children?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very poor	Needs Improvement	Fair	Good	Very Good	Don't Know

5. Bishop McPherson visits and shows concern for members.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very poor	Needs Improvement	Fair	Good	Very Good	Don't Know

6. Bishop McPherson supports Christian education for all age groups

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very poor	Needs Improvement	Fair	Good	Very Good	Don't Know

7. Bishop McPherson encourages member involvement in the community.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very poor	Needs Improvement	Fair	Good	Very Good	Don't Know

8. Bishop McPherson provides guidance in determining the goals of the church.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very poor	Needs Improvement	Fair	Good	Very Good	Don't Know

9. Bishop McPherson has a plan to help our church grow numerically.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very poor	Needs Improvement	Fair	Good	Very Good	Don't Know

10. Bishop McPherson practices exemplary self-care.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very poor	Needs Improvement	Fair	Good	Very Good	Don't Know

11. Bishop McPherson collaborates and works well with staff members.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very poor	Needs Improvement	Fair	Good	Very Good	Don't Know

This evaluation focuses on the performance of Bishop McPherson. It is designed to evaluate his performance based on previously established priorities. All components of the evaluation will be used to arrive at a final rating. Evaluate our pastor in the following categories by circling the appropriate level of performance. Base your evaluation on the job requirements and expectations.

There are three choices you can use to rate the various categories. They are:

- Exceeds Expectation
- Meets Expectation
- Needs Improvement

Exceeds Expectation means that our pastor has performed most duties in a superior manner. He took on various assignments using his own initiative. He contributes more than is expected role as pastor.

Meets Expectation means that he performs assigned duties in an acceptable manner and that he meets the expected requirements of his role.

Needs Improvement means that his performance of duties is rated at a less than an acceptable level than his role requires.

Each rating is followed by a comments section. This allows you the opportunity to describe any successes or concerns you may have. Please check the appropriate box.

1. Worship development and leadership

A. Develops liturgy (choice of hymns, prayers, scripture etc.) that is appropriate for the congregation.

- Exceeds Expectation
- Meets Expectation
- Needs Improvement

B. Conducts meaningful prayers of the people.

- Exceeds Expectation
- Meets Expectation

Needs Improvement

C. Administers sacraments effectively.

Exceeds Expectation
 Meets Expectation
 Needs Improvement

D. Leads worship committee to consider changes and innovations (such as whether elements of a “contemporary” worship service should be incorporated).

Exceeds Expectation
 Meets Expectation
 Needs Improvement

Comments

2. **Preaching** –

A. It is theologically solid and biblically.

Exceeds Expectation
 Meets Expectation

B. Preaching is relevant and applies to issues and experiences congregants are concerned about.

Needs Improvement
 Exceeds Expectation
 Meets Expectation
 Needs Improvement

C. Preaching gives worshipers a sense of what they need to do in order to be right with God.

- Needs Improvement
- Exceeds Expectation
- Meets Expectation
- Needs Improvement

D. Sermons are well-organized and have good content.

- Needs Improvement
- Exceeds Expectation
- Meets Expectation
- Needs Improvement

E. Sermon delivery is inspirational and motivational.

- Needs Improvement
- Exceeds Expectation
- Meets Expectation
- Needs Improvement

F. Sermons have a prescriptive component to them.

- Exceeds Expectation
- Meets Expectation
- Needs Improvement

Comments:

3. Administrative Leadership –

A. Demonstrates and practices using effective organizational skills (teamwork, communication, planning, etc.).

- Needs Improvement
- Exceeds Expectation
- Meets Expectation
- Needs Improvement

B. Appropriately works with and supervises church staff.

- Needs Improvement
- Exceeds Expectation
- Meets Expectation
- Needs Improvement

C. Builds capacity with lay leadership.

- Needs Improvement
- Exceeds Expectation
- Meets Expectation
- Needs Improvement

D. Appropriately plans for professional development for church staff.

- Exceeds Expectation
- Meets Expectation
- Needs Improvement

Comments:

4. **Pastoral Care**

A. Provides appropriate pastoral care to members of the congregation.

- Exceeds Expectation
- Meets Expectation
- Needs Improvement

B. He addresses needs of members who are in crisis situations.

- Exceeds Expectation
- Meets Expectation
- Needs Improvement

C. Makes referrals to other professionals as necessary.

- Exceeds Expectation
- Meets Expectation
- Needs Improvement

D. Trains and develops other members to engage in lay pastoral care.

- Exceeds Expectation
- Meets Expectation
- Needs Improvement

Comments:

5. Christian Education and Teaching

A. Facilitates or leads classes or groups.

- Exceeds Expectation
- Meets Expectation
- Needs Improvement

B. Encourages all ages to participate in Sunday School.

- Exceeds Expectation
- Meets Expectation
- Needs Improvement

C. Ensures that the Sunday School Department has needed resources.

- Exceeds Expectation
- Meets Expectation
- Needs Improvement

D. Has a plan for all church members to grow spiritually.

- Exceeds Expectation
- Meets Expectation
- Needs Improvement

Comments:

6. Mission Leadership and Involvement

A. Gets personally involved and encourages missions.

- Exceeds Expectation
- Meets Expectation
- Needs Improvement

B. Encourages church to financially support missions.

- Exceeds Expectation
- Meets Expectation
- Needs Improvement

C. Has a plan for the church to support missions.

- Exceeds Expectation
- Meets Expectation
- Needs Improvement

Comments:

7. Evangelism and New Member Outreach

A. Has a plan to reach the unchurched.

- Exceeds Expectation
- Meets Expectation
- Needs Improvement

B. Church is organized for effective outreach.

- Exceeds Expectation
- Meets Expectation
- Needs Improvement

C. Has an effective new member assimilation program.

- Exceeds Expectation
- Meets Expectation
- Needs Improvement

D. Has plans to help new members grow spiritually.

- Exceeds Expectation
- Meets Expectation
- Needs Improvement

Comments:

8. Professional and Spiritual Development

A. Attends to his own spiritual development.

- Exceeds Expectation
- Meets Expectation
- Needs Improvement

B. He is an active member of a ministerial association.

- Exceeds Expectation
- Meets Expectation
- Needs Improvement

C. He attends seminars/workshops that promotes ministerial competency.

- Exceeds Expectation
- Meets Expectation
- Needs Improvement

D. Is a recipient of professional journals, magazines, books, etc.

- Exceeds Expectation
- Meets Expectation
- Needs Improvement

Comments:

APPENDIX G
SELF-EVALUATION

SELF-EVALUATION

Dear Bishop McPherson,

We, the church's evaluation committee, would like for you to complete the attached "PASTOR'S SELF EVALUATION." Once you have completed the form, please arrange a day and time we can meet in order to discuss your responses to the items on the attached form. If you have any questions regarding any item, please feel free to contact the chairperson of our committee. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

The Evaluation Committee

PASTOR'S SELF EVALUATION

To be answered by Bishop McPherson and discussed with the Evaluation Committee

1. What do you view as some of your significant accomplishments since your last evaluation?
2. Please express any concerns you have regarding the congregation and your job expectations?
3. What significant objectives do you have for next year that was not accomplished this year?
4. Please rank-order your priorities for next year?

5. Please tell us about your ideas for your professional development for next year?

6. Discuss what additional resources (monetary, people, space, spiritual, etc.) or assistance you feel you need in order to have a successful year?

7. Other comments/concerns not addressed:

APPENDIX H
PASTOR/BISHOP MCPHERSON PERFORMANCE REVIEW

PASTOR/BISHOP MCPHERSON PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Please rank the performance of Bishop McPherson in the categories below. The evaluation should reflect his typical performance rather than his occasional

1 = Performance is below expectations

2 = Performance is acceptable

3 = Performance is Outstanding

NA = Uncertain/Unaware of performance in this area

Please circle one number for each line.

1. Pastoral Ministry

a. Communication ability	1	2	3	NA
b. Listening ability	1	2	3	NA
c. Counseling ability	1	2	3	NA
d. Crisis ministry	1	2	3	NA
e. Hospital visits	1	2	3	NA
f. Visits to shut-ins	1	2	3	NA
g. Visitation to membership	1	2	3	NA
h. Grief ministry	1	2	3	NA
i. Conducting weddings/funerals	1	2	3	NA
j. Teaching ability	1	2	3	NA

Comments:

2. Pulpit/Worship Ministry

a. Worship service planning	1	2	3	NA
b. Content of sermon	1	2	3	NA
c. Sermon delivery	1	2	3	NA
d. Staff/church membership involvement	1	2	3	NA
e. Hospitality encouragement	1	2	3	NA

Comments:

Church Administration

a. Leadership provided church staff	1	2	3	NA
b. Guidance provided to committees/staff	1	2	3	NA
c. Ability to Organize	1	2	3	NA
d. Corresponds in timely manner	1	2	3	NA
e. Respond to telephone/e-mails timely	1	2	3	NA
f. Ability to delegation	1	2	3	NA

Comments:

4. Personal Qualities

a. Level of people skills	1	2	3	NA
b. Appropriate personal and professional life	1	2	3	NA
c. Level of spiritual health	1	2	3	NA
d. Displays personal/professional growth	1	2	3	NA
e. Respects time of others (punctual)	1	2	3	NA

Comments:

5. Community/Denominational Participation

a. Participates in local denominational activities	1	2	3	NA
b. Participates in world-wide church activities	1	2	3	NA
c. Participates in local ministerial association	1	2	3	NA
d. Promotes justice for marginalized	1	2	3	NA

Comments:

6. Evangelism leadership

a. Commitment to evangelistic training	1	2	3	NA
b. Commitment to local evangelism	1	2	3	NA

Comments:

APPENDIX I
NARRATIVE EVALUATION

NARRATIVE EVALUATION

1. What are the evident strengths of Bishop McPherson?
2. What areas have you observed of Bishop McPherson?
3. How do you rate the overall effectiveness and potential of Bishop McPherson in his current role?
4. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of Bishop McPherson in leading the church towards the fulfillment of its mission?
5. What friendly criticism do you wish to express to Bishop McPherson?

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